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INDEPENDENT

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Major warns as the Euro is born

SARAH HELM and
DONALD MACINTYRE
Madrid

The "Euro" was born yesterday as the European Union took the historic decision to agree a name and confirm a timetable for a single currency, despite dire warnings from the Prime Minister.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, said last night that Britain would decide whether to participate in monetary union in early 1998, despite demands by Tory Euro-sceptics for a manifesto commitment to stay out of EMU.

In a potentially momentous step towards a currency union,

the EU's leaders agreed to identify the list of the first states to join EMU early in 1998; lock exchange rates and set up the European Central Bank in 1999; and bring in the new "Euro" notes and coins in January 2002.

The fresh impetus towards monetary union came after the Prime Minister warned that potential conflict between a minority of countries inside EMU and a majority outside could cause the single market to become "damaged if not destroyed".

Mr Major also warned that a botched single currency could act as a barrier preventing new countries from east and central Europe joining an enlarged EU.

But Mr Clarke took the Government's position the furthest yet in making it clear that Mr Major would not rule out between now and the election membership of the single currency in the course of the next Parliament. "I do not expect that to be in the manifesto," he said last night.

The decisions on EMU were a triumph for the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. Mr Kohl also successfully resisted a call by President Jacques Chirac of France to delay introducing the currency until the name had been tested by opinion polling. Theo Waigel, the

a further proof of their dedication to making monetary union happen.

"On the Euro we are going to build the future of European integration," the Spanish finance minister, Pedro Solbes, said in announcing the name.

Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, said the decision was "a strong signal of determination which should discard remaining doubts and hesitations" about currency union plans first drawn up in 1991.

But there was little enthusiasm for the choice of the Euro. "I think frankly it is a fairly unimaginative name," Mr Major said. The name will be used

on its own and not as the prefix for a "Euro-franc" or "Euro-pound", so the names of currencies which join monetary union will disappear after 2002.

Yves-Thibault de Silny, the EU Commissioner for financial affairs, said that without a choice of name, planning for the single currency could not go ahead.

The Commission will now mount a publicity and education effort to promote the Euro in every EU member state – including Britain, even though Mr Major negotiated an opt-out at Maastricht.

In spite of the opt-out, Britain is participating in the key decisions before the move to a single currency to keep its options open.

Overcoming his lack of enthusiasm for the name, Mr Major agreed to the Euro and to the timing of a shift to a monetary union.

British reservations about the single currency and its consequences for the European Union – political as well as economic – have been largely brushed aside so far.

Mr Major has said that he wants much more study of the ramifications of a system where some member states' currencies are locked together and others remain outside, adding that the EU is "sleepwalking" towards monetary union.

MORE
INDEPENDENT
ON SATURDAY

Market frenzy after TV Bill

NIC CICUTTA

Government proposals to relax ownership rules for Britain's television companies sparked a City share-buying frenzy yesterday as speculation mounted of a media takeover war.

Share prices in many smaller ITV companies rose sharply after Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, announced yesterday that a new Broadcasting Bill would no longer restrict television companies to just two ITV licences. It will be replaced by a more flexible limit of 15 per cent of audience share.

The Bill, which goes beyond earlier expectations, effectively clears the way for some media groups, including Granada, Carlton and M&G, to snap up smaller companies. When the Bill is enacted in the new year Carlton and Granada, who share 16.6 per cent of total audience, will be able to acquire other ITV companies, hugely expanding their power.

Miss Bottomley said yesterday: "Our proposals will liberalise British broadcasters to become world leaders."

Shares in some likely targets rose dramatically. Ulster TV added almost £100m to its market value of £1.3bn as shares rose 68p to £10.23. The value of HTV rose by about £25m to about £260m, as shares rose from 26p to 30.2p. Grampian rose 10p to 21.5p, adding 15p to its 60pm market value.

However, shares in potential predators for some of the smaller companies remained flat or dipped. Carlton, which already owns Central and has stakes in two others, was down 18p to 19.55p, and M&G fell 9p to 31.05p.

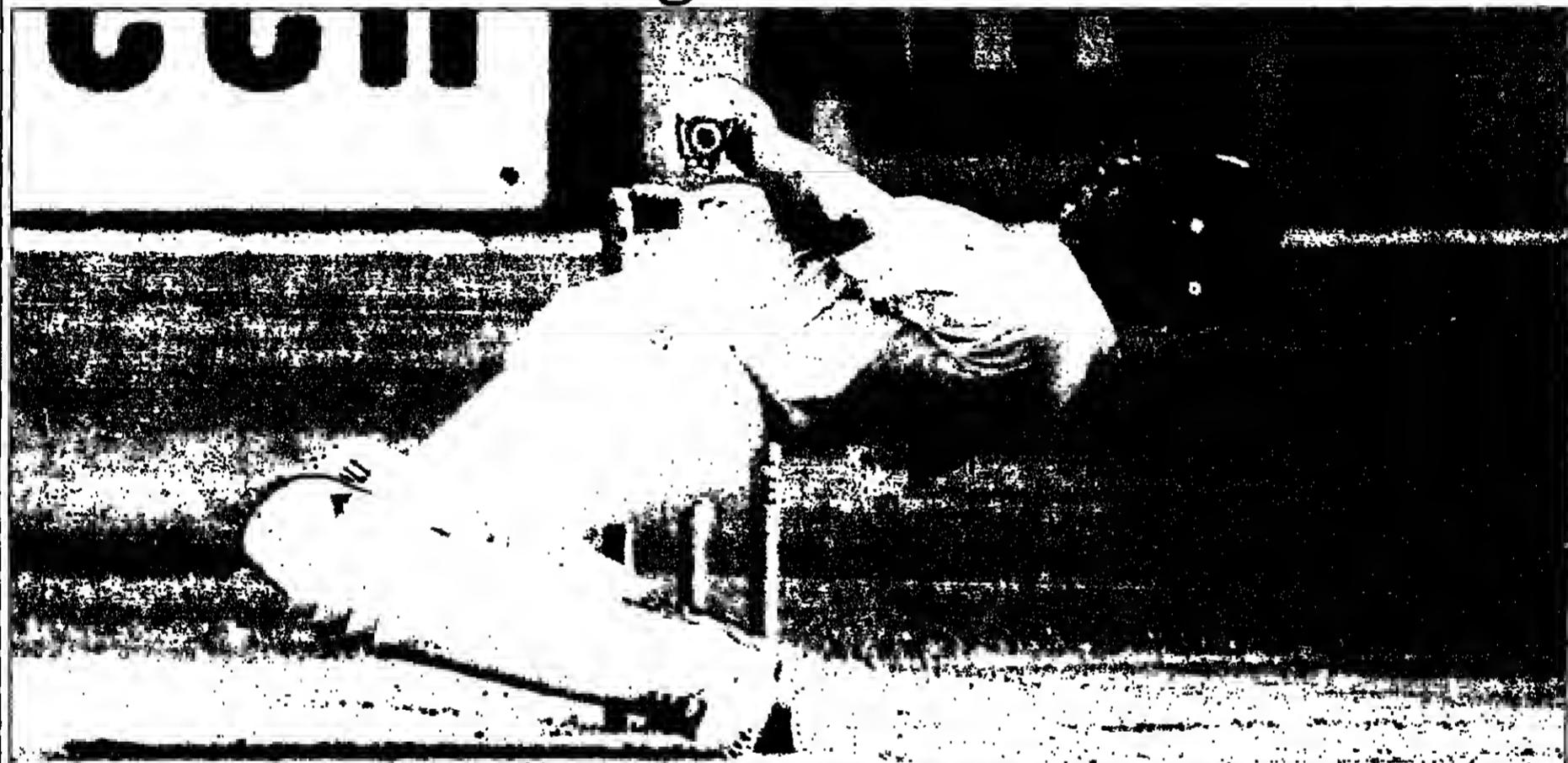
A Carlton Communications spokesman nevertheless described the proposed Bill as "very good news for the industry". He declined to say whether his company would be preparing bids for any others.

Cross-media ownership rules are also relaxed. Television companies will be able to own newspapers totalling up to one-fifth of national circulation, while newspaper groups can own ITV or Channel 5 licences subject to the 15 per cent rule.

This is good news for Associated, which owns the *Evening Standard* and *Today*, United, which owns the *Express* newspapers, and *Telegraph* plc. Mirror Group, which has the *Independent* and the *Daily Mirror* – and News International, which owns the *Sun*, *News of the World*, *Times* and *Sunday Times*, lose out. Both control more than one-fifth of national circulation.

Liberalising Bill, page 9
Takeover war, page 18
Comment, page 19

Smith ducks as England's fortunes take a dive



Down but not out: Robin Smith evading a bouncer from Shaun Pollock during England's first innings in the Third Test against South Africa in Durban yesterday. England struggled to 123-5 before bad light stopped play. Earlier, England had bowled South Africa out for 225 in their first innings. Derek Pringle, page 28

Photograph: Lawrence Griffiths

Oxford don jailed for books theft

PETER VICTOR

An Oxford University academic, one of Britain's leading experts on baroque music, was jailed for two years yesterday after he admitted stealing rare antique books from college libraries in Oxford and London and selling them to pay off his music programmes.

Mr McGeorge said the scholar began to sell the rare volumes to Blackwell's book shop in Oxford and the auctioneer Sotheby's in London, pocketing over £140,000. He told the dealer they had come from his late grandfather's collection.

"But over a period of three years from 1992 he began to take books from various



Heighes: Abused privilege

libraries. He told police he liked to take them home to copy them, but then became frightened of taking them back in case he was caught."

Heighes, who also lectures at Trinity College in London, was well known to BBC Radio 3 and World Service listeners for his music programmes.

Mr McGeorge said the scholar began to sell the rare volumes to Blackwell's book shop in Oxford and the auctioneer Sotheby's in London, pocketing over £140,000. He told the dealer they had come from his late grandfather's collection.

Heighes admitted 12 charges of theft and obtaining property by deception and asked for 113 other offences to be considered.

When Judge Francis Allen said it was extraordinary for Blackwell's to have bought some of the books, Mr McGeorge replied: "They were dealing with a man of eminence and respectability and a trustworthy academic. Heighes was a member of the Christ Church Col-

lege library and admits he abused the privilege to which he had access."

He added that Blackwell's and Sotheby's are trying to recover the books they sold on Heighes's behalf.

Patrick Eccles, defending, told the court Heighes felt "a genuine sense of shame and personal guilt". He said the don had used the money to pay off his mortgage. Heighes sold his home for £149,000 and, with an inheritance, had £195,000 available for compensation.

The judge told Heighes he had "grossly abused" the trust shown in him. He said he would deal with matters of compensation in January after agreement is reached over figures.

Biblical tale taken with a pinch of salt

ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs Correspondent

British geologists claim to have solved two of the most perplexing problems of Biblical scholarship: why did Lot's wife turn into a pillar of salt, and what exactly were the inhabitants of Sodom up to?

According to the book of Genesis, Sodom was destroyed by God in a rain of brimstone from heaven after its inhabitants had attempted to gang-rape two angels who were staying there with a righteous man named Lot, and had refused Lot's counter offer of two virgin daughters. Lot, with his wife and daughters, fled the city the next morning, urged by the angels not to look back.

"Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the valley,

and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."

The name of Sodom thus became the epitome of evil and decadence in the Bible; and the sin of Sodom identified with homosexuality, possibly because Lot, the Sodomite made good, was later seduced by both his daughters in turn and their offspring went on to found numerous tribes.

In an article in the *Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology*, two British geologists, Graham Harris and Anthony Beardow, have analysed soil and rock from the Lisan peninsula, which juts into the Dead Sea, and found them to be full of

bitumen, and made of rock types which will liquefy in a sufficiently large earthquake.

According to the geologists, the bitumen pits, which are also mentioned in Genesis, might burst into flames in an earthquake, which would also throw the waves of the Dead Sea into such confusion that salt-flats could rear up and form a momentary shape of a woman looking back at the catastrophe. Hence, they say, the origin of the legend of Lot's wife.

The cities of the plain, the geologists believe, were important trading hubs involved in the salt and the mining of bitumen, a tarry precursor to oil. So, in modern terms, Gomorrah was in the oil business and Sodom was in marketing.

IN BRIEF

Riot shotgun wounds
Two people suffered shotgun wounds in the Brixton riots, it emerged yesterday. Page 8

Campaigners derailed

Anti-rail privatisation campaigners failed to delay the sale of rail services. Page 6

Classic choice

Children read few classics and prefer romances and horror stories, a survey says. Page 5

Football transfer threat

The entire football transfer system is under threat after the European Court of Justice backed a Belgian player's fight to end clubs' right to buy and sell out-of-contract players. Page 27

Today's weather

Dry with sunny periods after early fog. Page 2

We were
going to call it
Bishops Finger.
But,
ooh, yes we did
didn't we.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.

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section
ONE

BUSINESS 18-21 COMMENT 16-17 CROSSWORD 2,28 GAZETTE 14
LEADING ARTICLES 16 LETTERS 16 NEWS 2-13 OBITUARIES 14
SHARES 20 SPORT 22-28 UNIT TRUSTS 21 WEATHER 2

Independent
WEEKEND

ARTS 8-9 BOOKS 10-12 BRIDGE 27 CHESS 27 COUNTRY 28
LISTINGS 26 MONEY 22-25 MOTORING 21 PROPERTY 13
REVIEWS 8 SHOPPING 5-7 TV & RADIO 27,28 TRAVEL 14-19

They're ripping out tongues, gouging eyes and hacking off hands.

Christmas in Sierra Leone.



We don't understand why men can become ruthless butchers, but in the city of Bo, Médecins Sans Frontières surgeons are dealing with some of the most horrific mutilations they've ever witnessed. Armed groups vying for control of the country's mining areas have found that maiming works better than slaughtering when trying to "encourage" people to leave their homes. Survivors are telling us that more refugees are being blinded so they can't reach help. Bo used to have a population of 60,000. It's now home to 1/4 million displaced men, women and children. 10,000 new refugees emerge from the bush every month. Malnutrition is rife. This "poor man's war" has only met with indifference and neglect from the international community. As a result, only very few people even know it is taking place. After all, how much are you reading about it in this paper? MSF works in the three cities with the largest refugee concentrations in the country. When the roads were closed by the fighting earlier this year, we alone established an air supply route and opened feeding centres. When cholera and measles broke out, we brought them under control and launched vaccination programmes. And of course, we opened treatment facilities for those appalling injuries. But to sustain our single-handed effort, we need your support. 87p of every £1 donated will go straight out to the field, so please give generously.

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Literary heritage under threat: Government survey finds children mainly read romances and horror stories

Schools are 'failing to introduce the classics'

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Children read few classics at school and their favourite leisure-time books are romances and horror stories, says a new government survey to be published next week. The findings will revive fears that Britain's literary heritage is in danger because schools are failing to introduce pupils to great authors.

Only 6 of the 74 classics of 13-year-olds and only 7 of 62 classics of 16-year-olds surveyed had studied any fiction written before 1900. However, they were reading a wide range of good modern fiction.

The survey of 84 schools in 10 local authorities from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the Government's curriculum advisers, examined what children were reading at school and at home in one week in March this year. Teachers were also asked to list all the texts studied by their classes during the spring term. The study was done before the introduction of the revised national curriculum for English which aims to put more emphasis on classic literature.

Dr Nick Tate, the authority's chief executive, said he was worried by the difference between what was happening in the classroom and the reading envisaged in the new curriculum. "I am not suggesting that children should read only Dickens, George Eliot, Keats and Shakespeare; a balance of reading is essential and it is perfectly reasonable to concentrate more on contemporary than earlier literature. However, the evidence of this survey suggests that we have shifted too far."

Modern poetry and books from other cultures were read as rarely as the classics. For seven-year-olds, teachers used Roald Dahl and Janet and Allan Ahlberg most frequently.

At 11, it was Ted Hughes, by 13, Betsy Byars came top and by 16, Barry Hines and John Steinbeck. The survey also shows that children read less and less widely as they move up the school until, for 16-year-olds, "individual reading had almost entirely given way to the reading of set examination texts".

At seven, pupils were reading a total of 137 authors but by the time they took GCSE the number had fallen to 27. "There was considerable reliance on the anthologies provided by the GCSE boards. Little wider reading, reading of pre-1900 fiction or texts from other cultures and traditions, took place in this term."

Thirteen-year-olds' reading in school is the most limited of all. And on their own, even the ablest in this age group read books based on films such as *Jurassic Park* or connected to CD-Roms.

It is not surprising, the report says, that seven-year-olds who are just beginning to read should be using modern fiction of all types but "it is surprising that they were not choosing or being introduced to the wide range of modern poetry and that literature stories available".

Teachers of 16-year-olds often had little idea which books their pupils were reading outside class despite a national curriculum requirement that individual reading must be monitored.

Anne Barnes, general secretary of the National Association for the Teaching of English, said: "If teenagers read at all, that is a good starting point. It is inappropriate for adults to... tell children what to read."

Most schools, she said, did read literature from the "canon" of great works and pupils should not go through their school careers without reading some classics, "but there are some teachers who have decided to apply the lowest common denominator".

CLARE GARNER

Adrian Mole is a favourite at William Ellis School. All but one of the 12- and 13-year-old boys interviewed at the north London comprehensive yesterday had read Sue Townsend's diaries at least once - and the remaining boy had seen the film.

"It's brilliant, it's just so funny. He's only a little bit older than us," they chorused. Darren Stadlen, 13, added: "I had four books in one volume and I read it all in a day because I liked it so much," he said.

Reading is not seen by the boys as a chore but a hobby on a par with watching television. The books they choose tend to relate to their interests and often to have been made into a film. In general, though, they prefer to read the story.

Ian Shaki, 12, said: "It's in the smallest details like someone picking something up. When you read it you see the picture in your head. It's far better than a film." Wingy Lung, 13, agreed. "In the *Jurassic Park* book they were ripping out parts of Dennis Nedry and that didn't happen in the film. There's more detail in a book and I want that."

Wingy, who reckons to read for an hour each night, is challenging his cousin to see who can finish the Michael Crichton sequel *The Last World* first.

They have not yet started on classics like Dickens and Shakespeare. Adam Guy, 12, did not relish the prospect. "I wouldn't exactly like to read *Romeo and Juliet*," he said. "At the moment I am reading an Agatha Christie. I like books like that,

where you get shown a murder but you've got to find out for yourself who's done it."

Teachers at William Ellis School have devised a "Passport to the World of Literature" which includes a travelogue for journeys into various lands of literature. Michael Wheale, 45, the head teacher, explained: "At this stage the main thing is to get them reading more, expanding their vocabulary, and expressing themselves. The Passport supports the school reading policy to read different genres of books to make sure the boys are widely read."

Ian is particularly well-travelled and like his friends, he raves about Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*. "It's great if you are a football fan and go to football matches. You realise that everything he writes down is true."

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Photograph: Edward Sykes

Adrian Mole guides boys into books

Children's favourite authors

Reading in class - examples of most popular authors

Individual reading - examples of most popular authors

Seven-year-olds
Roald Dahl, Dick King-Smith, Enid Blyton and books tied to films such as *Jurassic Park* and *Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Eleven-year-olds

Ted Hughes, Roald Dahl, Nina Bawden, Lynn Reid Banks, Berlin Doherty.

Thirteen-year-olds

Betsy Byars, Roald Dahl, Nina Bawden, Nigel Hinton, Robert Leeson.

Sixteen-year-olds

Theresa Tomlinson's *The Oakum Room* (from a GCSE anthology), Barry Hines, John Steinbeck, William Golding, Harper Lee.

Sixteen-year-olds

Joanne Trollope and PD James.

Sixteen-year-olds

Jackie Collins, Jostein Gaarder (*Sophie's World*), Terry Pratchett, Virginia Woolf, John Grisham.

WILL BENNETT

Shopping will soon smell entirely different in Britain because of new research which enables stores to choose the scent with which they want to entice customers and get them in the right mood to spend money.

The technology to deliver thousands of smells to order has been developed by the BOC Group, Britain's biggest manufacturer of industrial gases. It means that pubs can spruce up their image with an attractive aroma, and supermarkets can introduce the scent of baking bread, even though it is made nowhere near the premises.

BOC's first big customer is Woolworths, where a whiff of cinnamon and a subtle hint of cloves will be in the air this Christmas. Woolworths does not sell alcohol but has decided to put a mulled-wine smell into the air-conditioning system at its 20 biggest stores to get shoppers into a suitably mellow and festive mood.

Evelyn Shervington, BOC's business development manager, said: "We have been working on this for some years but it is in the last 12 months that we have developed the [necessary] innovative technology."

BOC buys artificial smells from fragrance manufacturers, who can offer them up to 17,000 different scents. The company then dissolves tiny quantities of the scents in liquid carbon dioxide, which is stored in ordinary gas cylinders. These are connected to the air-conditioning system and a timer controls release of the gas.

BOC is hoping to move into the growing virtual reality business so that smells can be introduced to make computer games seem even more real.

Smells are already used in some museums and historical displays. At the York Centre in York, which depicts Viking life in the area a thousand years ago, visitors smell everything from fresh fish to pig stinks and cesspits.

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Ashby 'acted like Jekyll and Hyde in witness box'

The evidence to support the contention that the Conservative MP David Ashby was homosexual was "overwhelming", a High Court jury was told yesterday.

Richard Hartley QC, counsel for the *Sunday Times*, which is fighting the MP's action over allegations that he is gay, said the question of damages did not arise as the "sing" of the article, published in January 1994, was true.

The MP for North West Leicestershire sat staring downwards as Mr Hartley described him as pompous and misguided in his decision to sue. As a witness, he was the worst combination of an MP and a barrister in that he was incapable of answering a simple question yes or no, he said.

Mr Ashby was a "Jekyll and Hyde" character who would burst out crying one moment and be laughing the next. "Is there ever a man who blows so hot and cold as he does? ... Can you really believe one word he says?"

Mr Ashby is claiming damages over the article which said that he shared a double bed with a man friend during a holiday in Goa at the end of 1993. Times Newspapers Ltd and the former *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil deny libel, although they accept Mr Ashby did not have a day with a man in Goa. They assert he was and is having an

affair with Dr Ciaran Kilduff. Mr Ashby, in seeking to show that his wife Silvana, was not to be believed about her evidence that he had become a homosexual, had "systematically" set out to discredit her.

Geoffrey Shaw QC, for Mr Ashby, said that in judging the MP's appearance in the witness box, the jury should take proper account of the combined effect that stress, marital difficulties and illness, which was undiagnosed in 1992-93, would have on a previously confident and gregarious character.

The stress had increased since the *Sunday Times* article, which is why the jury saw both the politician in control of his interaction with other people and also the man weeping before the onslaught of his wife's allegations. It did not help to talk about Jekyll and Hyde - a literary character who was a criminal psychopath.

In an apparent reference to this week's Court of Appeal ruling that judges and counsel in libel cases can indicate to a jury the level of award they deem appropriate, Mr Shaw said he was not availing himself of his new liberty to suggest a figure. He went on: "I do say that if you find for Mr Ashby in this case, it will be your duty to award substantial damages in accordance with the need to vindicate him."

The case continues on Monday when the judge will sum up.

Doctor calls for 'drug alert' reform

LIZ HUNT

A Canadian doctor who condemned government advice to 1.5 million women to change their Pill because of blood clot fears, yesterday renewed the attack and backed calls for a new "drug alert" system.

Professor Walter Spitzer, an expert on the "third generation" oral contraceptives at the centre of a big health scare in October, said that "much more care needs to be taken" when informing the public about the relative risk of various drugs.

Professor Spitzer had accused the Government of "doing very great harm" when it issued a warning based on three unpublished studies which showed that women taking the newest Pills, containing synthetic progestins, were twice

as likely to suffer a blood clot as women on older brands.

The risk was still half of that

associated with pregnancy, but

doctors were besieged with calls

from anxious women although

few had any previous warning

of the alert and did not know

the full reasons for it.

Commenting on the formal publication of some of the research in today's issue of the *Lancet*, Professor Spitzer said:

"Much more care needs to be

taken so that the practitioners

who advise... patients... can

be fully briefed and have the full

opportunity to study the issues

before they are confronted by an onslaught of inquiries."

The *Lancet* urges the Government to review its alert

system. Dr Richard Horden, editor, yesterday said the Pill alert was particularly badly handled.

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All the Queen's men: Senior officer cadets leading the Sovereign's Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst yesterday

Photograph: John Voos



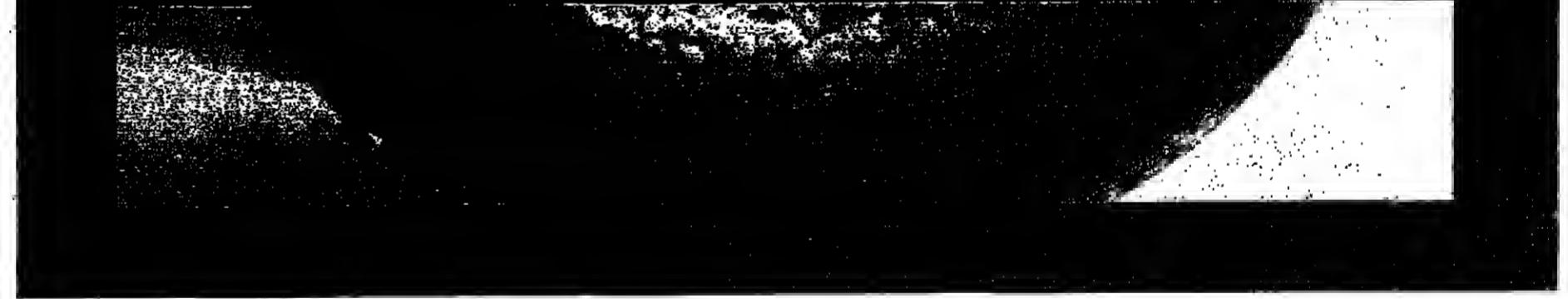
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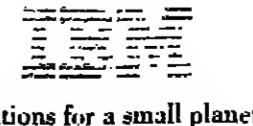
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Solutions for a small planet

Ministers plan to scrap ties on media control

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

The Broadcasting Bill, published yesterday, has gone further than many expected in liberalising media ownership rules.

The measures are an attempt by the Government to catch up with the extraordinary changes that have revolutionised the industry, above all in digital and cable television, since the Broadcasting Act 1990.

This has been achieved by abolishing the rules preventing companies owning more than two ITV licences, by allowing newspapers to hold ITV licences, and by allowing ITV companies to buy newspapers.

The Government believes the changes will facilitate the development of UK companies powerful enough to hold their own in the global media marketplace against international players such as Disney, Time Warner, Bertelsmann and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

The bill also sets out a structure for the launch of digital TV - the high-definition transmission offering wide-screen pictures and CD-quality sound - expected to replace the analogue system in 10 to 15 years.

The new rules provide for the licensing of an anticipated 18 digital channels. They also guarantee digital capacity to the BBC to cover all its present radio services - it started digital radio broadcast this year - and reserves space for the national commercial stations.

The Government has been warned repeatedly that digital TV is a risky and expensive investment and the Bill sets out to encourage development by broadcasters using certain concessions. They include the Government's decision to ask for no cash for control of multiplex licences for the first 12 years and, in deference to industry requests, to allow the licences to be rolled over at the end of the licence period (subject to satisfactory performance).

Each of the four terrestrial channels and Channel 5, due to start in January 1997, will get half a multiplex and can bid to operate the rest. The BBC's soon-to-be privatised transmission network can also compete.

Licences will be awarded by the ITC on the basis of the time bidders propose for the roll-out of digital coverage, and on programming quality. Sony, Motorola, BSkyB, are said to be interested in bidding.

Conditional access issues for digital television are not addressed in the bill. The Government plans to introduce a policy paper using the European Communities Act next year, naming Ofcom as regulator.

The Bill's key elements include:

- An ownership limit of two ITV licences changed to a maximum 15 per cent share of total terrestrial, satellite and cable audience.
- Local newspapers with more than 20 per cent, but less than 50 per cent, of local newspaper circulation may acquire up to 50 per cent of local radio ownership points in their area.
- Merger of the Broadcasting Standards Council and Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

- Channel 4's funding formula amended more in its favour from 1998.

- Abolishes rule preventing ITV companies, and local newspapers from owning local services in areas of geographical overlap.

- Maintains rule preventing any company having more than 20 per cent stake in ITN.

- Classic FM, Virgin and Talk Radio can renew their analogue licences for a further eight years if they take up guaranteed digital radio places.



Artful performance: The Young National Trust Theatre giving a preview of *Very Big Thing*, its Christmas pantomime, which is being staged - admission free - in the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery, in central London, on 19-22 and 27-30 December

Photograph: Edward Sykes

Alderney relives end of wartime exile

BILL BROWN

More than 200 people gathered yesterday in the Channel Island of Alderney to celebrate the day 50 years ago when they began rebuilding their community from the ashes of a brutal Nazi slave camp.

The 1,300 islanders had fled to England in June 1940, but less than 500 returned after the end of the Second World War. They found an island devastated by the Germans and grim reminders of the thousands of slave labourers who died fortifying the island.

Europe had been free for seven months when, 10 days before Christmas 1945, the Southern Railways ferry eased into Alderney harbour. Buster Hamond, 72, was among those on board who watched as ships flew "welcome home" signals. An on-shore guard of honour fired



Occupying army: The Channel Islands were the only part of the UK to fall to the Germans

Photograph: Hulton Deutsch

a 21-gun salute and the all-clear was sounded.

"It was the best day of my life. A friend was playing 'Home Sweet Home' on his trumpet as we sailed in. It was quite dark, a winter's morning, but it was just sheer excitement," said Mr Hamond, who helped organise

permitted one small suitcase, and families worked into the night burying the family silver and hiding valuables under floor boards. Pets were destroyed and farm animals let loose.

A church bell called islanders to the harbour on 23 June 1940.

Avril Sebire was nearly left behind.

"Grandad didn't want to leave. My parents piled him into our car and when they arrived at the harbour mum said, 'I'll take the baby now.' I had been left sleeping in my cot in front of the farm hillock unaware of my mother's distress," said Ms Sebire, who flew from Australia with her two sisters, Jean and Lynne, to attend the celebrations.

Raiding parties from Guernsey and Jersey took advantage of the exodus and ransacked homes, farms and pubs. Then the Germans arrived.

The excitement of reclaiming their island home in 1945 was

tempered as they realised the enormity of the task ahead of them. Jean Sebire, then 14, said: "I had a fantastic time, but I remember my mother paddling through inches of water in a backroom kitchen crying her eyes out trying to cook."

A plague of fleas and rats were just two more inconveniences. Jackie Main was billeted in the Grand Hotel with many other islanders when they first returned. "You could hear the rats gnawing at the floorboards. It was so bad that when we went to collect our hot water bottles we always went in a gang so we could scare the rats away," he said.

Yet, as with most of the young people, life was an enormous adventure for 10-year-old Jackie - it took the authorities six months to set up a school.

"Life was smashing. I had a beautiful childhood," he said.

Beatles head best album list

JOHN MCKIE

If the last month's batch of television programmes, releases and hype hadn't already proved it, a magazine poll has confirmed the Beatles as makers of music fans' all-time favourite albums.

The rock music magazine *Moj* polled 1,200 of its readers for their favourite pop albums and the Fab Four occupy four of the top six places, with their 1966 classic *Revolver* topping the top 100. Only the Californian sounds of the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* at No 2 and Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* at No 5 in-

terrupt the run of classic Beatles albums - *Revolver*, *Abbey Road*, *The Beatles* and *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Three albums from Bob Dylan and one from the Rolling Stones complete the Top 10. But the Top 100 represents bad news for fans of British bands such as Blur and Oasis. No British album from the 1990s makes the Top 100.

The poll is believed to be one of the most extensive ever conducted of music fans. *Moj*'s editor, Mat Snow, said: "Even though there's a lot of excitement about the current Britpop

renaissance, the jury of our fans are mainly in the late twenties and upwards, and voted for records built to last."

Other pop fans were less impressed with the results. "I remember reading the *NME* 1976 Book of Rock," said Paul Lester, features editor of *Melody Maker*, "and all the same albums in that book's poll are in this one. It's like the last 20 years of music never happened."

Paul McCartney said: "I'm surprised it [*Revolver*] would be someone's" absolute top favourite because it's a strange album."

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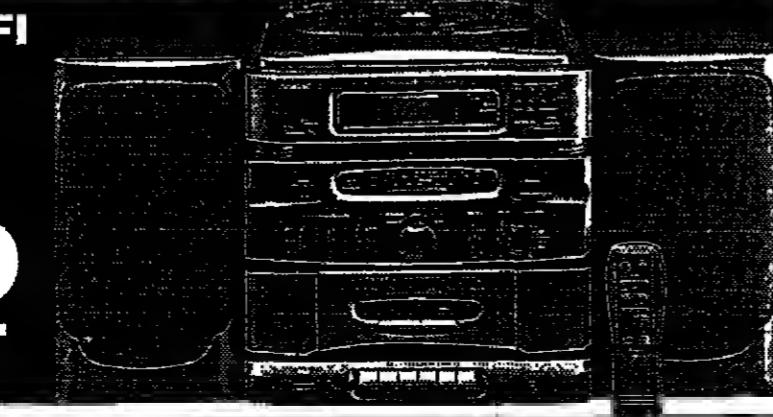
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international

French see a glimmer at end of the tunnel

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

France started to emerge from hibernation yesterday as isolated sections of the transport network crept hesitantly into gear after the three-week shutdown. The first high-speed train left Lille and by afternoon half the Paris Métro and suburban railway lines were operating a limited service. The occasional bus could be seen amid the still-clogged cars and the sun shone after almost a week of gloom.

But if the mood on the streets had lightened and there was the first real hope of a return to normal life, the political conflict between the government and the public sector was far from over. Even before the return to work was fully under way, more battles loomed, any one of which could damage the chances of industrial peace.

The two big unions that have led the strikes, the Force Ouvrière and the CGT, confirmed plans for more national street demonstrations today to insist on total withdrawal of the government's plan for welfare reform. The incipient return to work, already spreading, and the proximity of Christmas mean marches will probably be a gesture rather than a real threat to the government, but they still have potential to cause trouble.

The government is facing unexpected procedural difficulties getting its welfare-reform legislation through parliament, despite its 80-per-cent majority.

ty; the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, may not be able to get the laws through by Christmas, as he had hoped.

The most immediate dispute has erupted over the "social summit" – a round-table of ministers, trade-union and employers' representatives that was demanded by the unions as part of any settlement. Mr Juppé's decision, announced last Sunday, to hold such a summit was regarded by unions as a key government concession. But they did not look carefully enough at the small print.

What Mr Juppé has offered is a "jobs summit" on issues of lesser concern to the unions, such as job creation and cutting working hours, rather than on welfare reform and pensions. The unions have realised in addition that the planned date – Thursday – is the penultimate working day before Christmas, leaving them little time to act if they do not like the outcome.

Belatedly, they want the meeting brought forward and "broadened". Employers' organisations may not even turn up: they fear an unsatisfactory discussion could spread to public-sector disputes into the private sector, and want the whole thing called off.

This dispute adds to doubts about what the public sector has won from the protests. Mr Juppé says he has abandoned plans for any changes in public-sector pension arrangements, suspended the restructuring plan for the railways – sacrificing in

the process the head of SNCF, Jean Bergougnoux, who resigned yesterday – and agreed to the contentious "summit".

But what is to stop him bringing all the proposals back by a different route once they are back at work? On Thursday the Industry Minister, Franck Borotra, said the SNCF plan had not been abandoned.

So far as the transport strikes are concerned, however, the end is in sight. After three weeks of uncharacteristic restraint, drivers were sounding their horns again in Paris yesterday. But the strikes have left their mark.

Yesterday the Métro seemed to be in a time-warp. The walls were plastered with the same advertisements as three weeks ago, the dates of the promotions and special offers long since past.

Those who tried to push their familiar green tickets into the machines were thwarted, because they were switched off: travel was free. "The least they could do," muttered one woman, "after all we've been through."

Passengers, at first few and far between, sometimes cheered as the train came into view. In the carriages, it was apparent how three weeks of enforced walking has changed the city's elegant urban-dress codes. The resumption of the Métro had caught Parisians, still in the country jackets and trainers which had gradually replaced their cashmere coats and court shoes, by surprise.

Right signal: Against a backdrop of high-speed trains, workers at Lyon celebrate the decision to end the stoppage. Photograph: Gerard Malie/AP



Fear of change drives Austrian voters back into cocoon

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Vienna

Last week Austrian shops were, for the first time ever, allowed to open on the Catholic Maria Empfängnis (Immaculate Conception) holiday. Naturally such a bold step had not been taken without careful thought. For weeks prior to the holiday the media had been full of animated debate.

The powerful Church and trade unions remained steadfastly opposed to the shops opening. Business leaders were staunchly for – pointing out that, as Austria was now part of the European Union, any Austrians wanting to go shopping on the day in question would simply

flood across the borders to neighbouring Italy and Germany to do so.

In the end, in the classic Austrian manner, a compromise was reached: shops were not obliged to open, but could if they wanted. Many did, subsequently reporting their best takings of the year.

The row over the holiday highlighted the conflicting attitudes to change in Austria as it slowly pulls itself out of the post-war cocoon within which it was confined for 40 years, and tries to re-connect with all the countries that surround it. It also showed that, while resistance to (and fear of) change is strong,

there is a realisation that, in many cases, it is inevitable.

Austria's entry to the EU at the beginning of this year resulted in the lifting of trade barriers with its partners to the west, and marked the beginning of a serious debate about whether to drop the long-standing neutrality enforced on the country as the price for the departure of occupying Russian troops in 1955.

But the real catalyst for change was the collapse of the Iron Curtain six years ago and the sudden reopening of the borders with the countries to the east, which were formerly part of the old Habsburg empire. A

look through a Viennese phone book, with its thousands of names such as Bradilovic and Simjanowski, underlines the strength of that legacy. But while the Austrian capital has long been ethnically mixed, the dramatic increase since 1989 of would-be immigrants from the east has further fanned the flames of anxiety.

As Ernst Neubau, a pensioner in the working-class district of Favoriten, put it: "There are some parts of Vienna now where all you hear are foreign languages. Instead of allowing them in we should look after ourselves first."

Mr Neubau was one of

hundreds cheering Jörg Haider, the popular leader of the far right Freedom Party (FPO), at a rally in the final countdown to tomorrow's general election. And he liked what he heard.

"Since the Iron Curtain came down, Austria has become a centre for international crime: drug-dealers, car thieves, pimps and bandits," stormed Mr Haider, a man who once praised Hitler's "orderly" employment policies.

"We demand an absolute, complete stop to immigration."

In addition to foreigners, Mr Haider's other main targets are the Social Democrats (SPO) and the People's Party (ÖVP), which, together or alone, have

the constitution to allow for the merging of the posts of chancellor and president.

That is probably more change than most Austrians like to contemplate and for those seeking a less radical departure, the ÖVP is promising comprehensive structural reform, particularly of the country's bloated budget, while retaining the best features of the old system.

And for those not wanting any change at all, Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, now into his tenth year of power and clearly looking past his prime, is running a ticket of "no experiments".

Tomorrow's poll, which comes just 14 months after the country's last general election, was brought about after the

SPO and ÖVP fell out over how to reduce Austria's spiralling budget deficit. In many ways it represents a watershed: a clear signal that the old system of consensus has broken down, and that the old two-party system is on its last legs. It may even lead to a radical re-alignment, with the ÖVP switching coalition partners and inviting Mr Haider to join them in government. On the other hand, it may lead to the SPO and ÖVP once again reconciling their differences and carrying on in the same old tired but tried and tested ways.

As Robert Wiesner, a television journalist put it: "There is certainly a mood for change but change with stability." Nothing could be more Austrian.

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Death watch: People in a stadium in Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, watch members of a gang who robbed and killed motorists being publicly sentenced yesterday. They were then shot on a nearby hillside, where one of the women who was dispatched with 12 others had to beg her executioner to shoot her again after the first two bullets failed to kill her.

Crowds greet Arafat in Nablus

PATRICK COCKBURN Nablus and SAFA HAERI Gaza

Yasser Arafat returned to Nablus yesterday for the first time since 1967 when Israel captured the city, the biggest on the West Bank. Thousands of Palestinians watched the PLO chairman land by helicopter beside Israeli military headquarters and cheered enthusiastically as he climbed onto its roof to address them.

Mr Arafat led the 15,000 Palestinians from Nablus and surrounding villages in chanting: "With our soul and blood we will redeem you, O Palestine."

Palestinian soldiers with assault rifles - theoretically part of the newly installed local police force - guarded the rooftops for snipers, scouring the wooded hillside overlooking the spot where Mr Arafat had landed.

The mood of the crowd was hopeful rather than confident, as if they were uncertain the Israeli withdrawal would make a real difference to their lives.

"We are beginning to see results from Oslo, but nobody trusts the Israelis," said Abdullah, a local Fatah leader. He added: "It will take 18 months for people here to know

what they are really getting." Mr Arafat was expected to declare officially late yesterday for the presidency of the new, 83-member Palestinian self-rule council, which is to be elected on 20 January. Nobody doubts that he will win and that an overwhelming majority of the council will come from his Fatah organisation.

Earlier, in an interview in Gaza with the *Independent*, Mr Arafat demonstrated confidence that the assassination on 4 November of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister, had increased popular support in

Israel for the Oslo agreement. "It backfired on the Israelis, for at least 74 per cent of the Israelis now say they support the peace process," he said.

The West Bank is also more prosperous than Gaza, with its vast refugee population. Mr Arafat said: "All our infrastructure [in Gaza] has been completely destroyed during the occupation and we are starting from zero."

He may also draw hope from the fact that Simon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister, is not as committed as was Mr Rabin to stopping Palestinians from working in Israel.

Their exclusion has led to a sharp decline in living standards in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr Arafat said the future of the Israeli settlements would be dealt with when final status was set with Israel next year.

So far, not a single settler has been moved. At the Israeli settlement of Elon Moreh, on a hilltop overlooking Nablus, residents said they were worried rather than frightened by Palestinian self-rule. Valentini, a recent Russian Jewish immigrant, guarding the entrance to the settlement, gestured with his sub-machine gun towards the sprawling suburbs of Nablus in

the valley below. "I don't know what land is held by the Israelis down there and what is held by the Palestinians," he said.

Half-way down the hillside, below Elon Moreh, enormous bulldozers were scraping a road through an olive grove that will allow the 2,000 settlers to travel to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv without going past Nablus.

The Israeli government has promised the 135,000 settlers on the West Bank they will all have bypass roads to avoid the towns under Palestinian control. Whatever Mr Arafat's hopes, Elon Moreh and the other settlements look very permanent.

Assuming the Senate agrees

Clinton defies Senate to sue him over Whitewater

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

which led to the bank's demise, at a cost to taxpayers of \$6bn. But the White House insists the documents are a mere "pognon", of scant or no significance to a case about which the public cares little and understands less. If so, aides argue, the confrontation will not dent Mr Clinton's current approval ratings of over 50 per cent, among the highest since he took office.

As the deadline passed, President Bill Clinton's spokesman Mike McCurry said the president had decided to "stand on principle" and not release notes of a meeting between White House aides and his private lawyer in November 1993, on grounds they were protected by attorney-client confidentiality.

Assuming the Senate agrees next week to the demand of the Whitewater Committee, a struggle in the courts will begin that could last six months or more. Almost certainly, the final word will lie with the Supreme Court, in the midst of a presidential election year.

For Mr Clinton, and his Republican tormentors on Capitol Hill, the stakes are high, as public attention turns again to the controversy over his business deals as Governor of Arkansas in the Eighties which have dogged his presidency from its outset. Despite its protestations to the contrary, the White House looks as if it is engaged in that supreme Washington transgression, a cover-up. But if nothing emerges, Republicans will be open to charges of wasting time and public money on a petty political vendetta.

For all the fuss, no one outside the immediate White House circle knows what the notes contain. Republicans dream of a "smoking gun" that would prove Administration meddling into the investigation of the 1989 collapse of the Madiso Guaranty Bank, owned by the former partner of the Clintons in the ill-fated Whitewater real estate venture - or that the Clintons knew far more than they have let on about the dubious dealings

With the current stop-gap

As Whitewater moved towards the courts, another deadline loomed to avert a second Government shutdown due to start today, failing a budget agreement between the Administration and Congress.

With the current stop-gap

international

Russian elections: Worried leader tries to see off Communists as Chechnya deals another blow to his regime

Yeltsin warns on terror of the past

PHIL REEVES
Moscow
CARLOTTA GALL
Grozny

A worried Boris Yeltsin made a last-minute effort last night to head off predicted Communist gains in tomorrow's Russian parliamentary elections. In a national television address to fellow Russians, he begged them not to allow the "forces of the past to come to power", but to preserve the nation's "fragile life".

Yet as he sought to claw back support from a disillus-

ning nor strict regulation of prices can bring salvation," he said. "The economy never worked well on commands. It cannot be improved by a general's order. I am well aware of the scale of the problems ... but we are nevertheless moving to a quieter, normal and decent life."

Until last night the president, who is convalescing after heart trouble, has remained largely aloof from the election campaign. He did not specifically name any party, but made clear his support for the government-backed centrist party, Our Home is Russia, led by the Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, by intoning one of their slogans - calling for "stability and accord in our common home, Russia".

In an effort to shake many Russians out of what seems to be political torpor, he appealed to younger voters, and fears that many will not vote. "You must not allow the country to be returned to the times when people were told how to dress, how to wear their hair and which songs to sing." And he appealed to the elderly, warning them against a return to the terror of the Soviet Union.

His speech coincided with at-

tempts to carry up votes by the Kremlin, which will be alarmed by evidence that Our Home is

lagging behind both the Communists and, in some areas, hard-line nationalists like Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Mr Zhirinovsky, who appears to have made some late gains, ended his campaign with a tirade against the West: "While you were chewing gum and eating Snickers bars, we were conquering space."

The government released fig-

ures showing that inflation this month was running at around

3 per cent, the lowest since eco-



Well aware: As he drags water from a distant pump, Alexei Sergejevich knows the economy is a big issue in Russia's elections. Photograph: AP

nomic reforms began. Rather more unconvinced, the presidential envoy to Chechnya, Oleg Lobov, claimed that elections there were proceeding successfully, and that turnout

was above the required 25 per cent threshold.

In Chechnya itself, where three days of voting began on Thursday, this appeared to be far from the case. Chechen

fighters, who have vowed to disrupt the poll, seized control of the town of Urus-Martan, 20 miles south of Grozny, and fighting continued in the republic's second largest city, Gu-

dermes, where at least 30 Russian soldiers have died, according to Russians on the scene.

As the landscape echoed to the din of tank shells and Grad missiles, Russians looked on in

some bewilderment. One soldier surveying the chaos complained that the army was not allowed to use its full force. "And we, meantime, are cannon fodder."

"Neither centralised plan-

ning nor strict regulation of

prices can bring salvation," he said. "The economy never worked well on commands. It cannot be improved by a general's order. I am well aware of the scale of the problems ... but we are nevertheless moving to a quieter, normal and decent life."

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Whatever you put the presents under this year, it will symbolise everything from eternal life to market forces. By Peter Popham

When the fir traders spruce up their act

Not long ago, a Christmas tree meant a Norwegian spruce: short needles, bright green colour, no appreciable scent, horrendous "needle drop". Buy it, hang it with tinsel, take it down, stick it optimistically in the garden, watch it die – the ritual was well established.

But everything changes, even hoary old customs like this. Flashback to the *Times* of 27 November 1985: "New varieties of Christmas tree will provide alternatives to the ubiquitous Norway spruce within the next few years, a leading producer forecast yesterday. Fast forward to now, and lo, it has come to pass. The old tree ritual has in consequence gained several extra stages:

1) Agonise over choice: spruce, Nordman blue, Douglas fir, Scots pine, Colorado fir, etc.

2) Agonise over whether to get one with roots exposed, one that has been potted or one that has been merely amputated. Try to imagine the tree's likely appearance once you get it home – it has been "steamed for your convenience", so its shape is anybody's guess.

3) Invest further, to minimise the dreaded needle drop, in a Christmas Tree Stand (Homebase, £6.99) with giant four-pint enclosed water reservoir and four positive locks wedges to grip the tree securely in place.

4) Rumble, as needles stubbornly continue to strew carpet, presents, sleeping pets, etc, on how much better you would have been to invest in an artificial one. No needle drop; no agonising over why the celebration of Christmas should involve the taking of a tree's life. And you can use it over and over again.

As the north-easterly gales howl down Britain's high streets, this is the weekend when the Christmas tree industry goes into overdrive. Birman Wood comes to Dunsinane in Stoke Newington Church Street in London's East End, the greengrocers practically disappear behind the clumps

of trees, which sprawl away across several neighbouring shopfronts.

Look closely and it appears that none of them are the familiar spruces. There is the "famous non-drop blue" with longer needles, the Douglas with soft, brush-like needles and piney scent, the Scots pine, with longer needles still. All of these are dearer than traditional tree: the Nordic blues are going for between £20 and £65, depending on size. "The spruces will be in next week," the dealer says. "We sell them

old furrier's shop. "It's come unstuck this year," he grumbles mildly. "The Norwegians, Belgians and Germans have sent their trees over too early and priced too dear – couldn't sell them, and now they've come down in price and they're a drag on the market." As evidence, he cites the fact that trees are available this year not only from people like himself and shops such as Homebase but are also to be found for sale in garage forecourts, the corners of pubs, everywhere. "It's £20 for any tree – normally a Nordic blue would cost you £25 to £30. I'll get my money back this year, but I won't earn any."

If Mr Rooney is right and the market is glutted, it's news to Sainsbury's Homebase. Some of their trees are selling for twice as much as he hopes to get. I watched as a Canadian paid £44.99 for an 8ft "Needlelast Cut Noble Fir – Distinctive silvery blue foliage and layered branches", according to the label, which also gave the Latin name. "I like the wide spaces between the branches on the Noble fir," he explains. "It makes it easier to hang things on them."

Highly competitive for price, Mr Rooney has a fair amount of variety, too. But the Nordic non-drop is where he expects most of his sales. "Most people live in flats these days, and they don't like the mess you get with needles falling," he explains. What about the handsome Scots pine, with its clusters of soft bushy needles, which is also alleged to be a good non-dropper? "Only old-fashioned people and nannies buy them," he says, rather mysteriously. "You can have a tree for a tenner." What about the spruces? "Only old-fashioned and very poor people go for spruce," he says.

I look again at his spruces, and it's true that there is something slightly poverty-stricken about them, with their thin, abbreviated needles, their weedy, pale, exposed branches, compared to the vigorous

"Cruel? We replace every one cut down: It's like saying it's cruel to cut a cabbage'

later because they cut them later – to delay needle drop as long as possible." So if it's a tree that is both cheap and traditional you want, the best advice is to wait. Next week, £10 will buy you a good spruce. Wait longer still – until Christmas Eve, say – and you will be able to pick one up for next to nothing.

Over in Islington's Chapel Market, John Rooney is at his usual patch outside Cohen's

store unsolicited comments from audiences, maybe I should just fill them in on a few alternatives rather than just coming back at the heckler with a factual statement, which I could never get away with. (For example, if I'd answered the surfeit of "You're fat!" heckles with "Yes I am," a quick exit would have been called for.)

First of all, there are what are considered to be commonly owned heckle put-downs such as: "Never drink on an empty head," or: "Isn't it a shame when cousins marry." (One more likely to be heckled at by them, perhaps.) Most comics, however, try to have their own personal put-downs. For tads I find "Where's your girlfriend? Outside grazing?" works well. However, the best comics are the ones who come up with a put-down suited to the moment. Had I been the princess I think I'd have gone for something like: "Not in America, as they haven't shot anyone today." Anti-American I grant you, but I can't help myself.

Good to see loads more column inches devoted to what Princess Diana has been wearing this week. At least it keeps the boring old Bosnia peace treaty out of the tabloids. The tabloids did manage to squeeze in, however, the fact that our very own Mother Teresa got heckled at a dinner in the US. As someone who has had enough heckling to last me a lifetime, I wasn't particularly impressed with the heckle: "Where are your children?" – or the answer: "They're at school."

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the hearts of people from Surrey. It's not that bad, chaps. I remember a policeman telling me it was a long way down the list of well-dodged areas crime-wise (somewhere in Glasgow, come top). However, I wouldn't walk through Brixton at two o'clock in the morning. Then again, I wouldn't walk through Hampstead then either.

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Jo Brand's week

Sadly, for some unfortunates, the office party season is upon us and it appears that the male gender are far more optimistic about their chances of a spot of rumply-pumpy than the female.

According to some research, 25 per cent of men are pretty certain they will have a fling at the office party, as opposed to 3 per cent of women. Dead hopeful aren't they, these blokes? Looks like there will be quite a few unhappy bunnies at the office this year. Either that, or the 3 per cent of hopeful women are going to be kept very busy.

Something about the consumption of daytime alcohol at Christmas results in a excess of naughtiness in certain individuals as they continue drinking on into the evening. Well, this is what I presume happened to four people who came to see a show I was doing in north London this week. The quartet settled themselves at a table right at the front, intent upon ruining the show using a combination of loud conversation, insane heckling and eventual ignition of a pile of paper in the ashtray on their table. Despite initially polite remonstrations from myself, moving on to fairly abusive comments from myself and the audience, the table from hell refused to behave like adults. So they were invited to leave by two security staff.

However, given, I suppose, that it is the season of goodwill, one decided she wasn't leaving without a ruck and I found myself on stage like a reluctant Harry Carpenter attempting to interpret the scene of flailing arms and breaking glasses. If you four are now sober and at one point were fans of mine, please don't be any more.

Despite millions of pounds apparently being pumped into it, Brixton burst into rioting again this week. It hardly seems any time since I last went up there before, when I was working in the area in a psychiatric emergency clinic. Several barks went down to Brixton at the time to "have a look" while those of us who didn't want to risk a brick in the mush stayed safely at work. Brixton is one of those names that strike fear into



face unsolicited comments from audiences, maybe I should just fill them in on a few alternatives rather than just coming back at the heckler with a factual statement, which I could never get away with. (For example, if I'd answered the surfeit of "You're fat!" heckles with "Yes I am," a quick exit would have been called for.)

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ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL TELEPHONE 0171-293 2000/0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2435/0171-345 2435

Let us eat, drink ... and let go of nanny's hand

In the past the Government kept us healthy. We were told when, where and what we could drink. Westminster's strict writ ran throughout the pubs of the land. Its word was gospel on what we should eat. Likewise no medicinal drug was consumed without Whitehall's imprimatur. There wasn't much argument. Nanny knew best on matters of health. The Government was authoritative and authoritarian. This was a comfortable but confining world.

And then Britain started to grow up and tug at the constraints. We got fed up with kilojoule licensing laws that were more puritanical than those of other nations in Europe. So they were relaxed. Alternative medicine thrived as people sought out their own cures among herbalists, aromatherapists and reflexologists who plied their unregulated wares beyond the doctor's surgery. No prescriptions were required. In a culture of complaint, consumers stopped just accepting what they were given: they demanded better and quicker NHS treatment. Meanwhile illegal drugs such as cannabis and Ecstasy grew popular, no matter how often they were officially condemned or what laws were passed against them.

Then this week we saw further signs of retreat by the nanny health state. Faced with scientific evidence that advice to the public on alcohol consumption pitched the recommended limits too low, Stephen Dorrell had a problem. Should he listen to nanny doctors, who would keep the happy news a secret? Or should he tell

the truth and let people decide for themselves? Mr Dorrell made his choice. He rejected the old view that the public deserves only those truths that guide behaviour towards a desired end. He treated us like adults. Cheers, Mr Dorrell.

But in loosening its authoritarian hold on health, the state has got into unfamiliar difficulties. It has also lost its authority. Now we are encouraged to make up our own minds about health issues, we've turned into cynics. We don't trust Mr Dorrell when he says it's safe to drink more. Is he in cahoots with the brewers, we wonder? Was his announcement no more than a scam to top up Christmas drinking and boost the Treasury's tax revenue? Was he, perhaps, trying to increase the feel-good factor?

As for his advice on eating beef, many people think that it stinks as badly as a month-old steak. Ministers speak with great certainty that there is no doubt about the safety of beef. They tell us that they are stuffing the faces of their children with hamburgers. But they may as well be trying to sell turkeys on New Year's Day: few people are buying the message.

The suspicion, right or wrong, is that ministers are in the pocket of the livestock industry. Thousands of people are simply giving up on beef. Consumers know that scientific opinion is divided and some have decided that the risk, however minor, is not worth running.

Even when the state is absolutely honest and comes clean with up-to-date information, it ends up in a mess. The warning in October about the



increased dangers of thrombosis posed by seven brands of the Pill scared millions of women. They were told of the discovery, via the media, at a hastily arranged press conference. The evidence comprised three unpublished studies that family doctors, suddenly besieged by anxious women, had not seen. The extra danger was negligible in comparison with some health risks: pregnant women still face twice the risk of thrombosis as someone on the condemned contraceptives. Panic reigned.

All of this is indicative of a wider truth: the Government is neither trusted in its health pronouncements nor particularly adept at getting its message across. Ministers can't win: they are attacked either for being silenced by powerful vested interests or for going in for unnecessary scaremongering. As the *Lancet*, a medical magazine, comments in this weekend's edition, health alerts are handled "more often badly and seldom perfectly".

So what should the Government do? It should continue to dismantle the nanny health state and replace it with the information state. This would establish the Government not as a source of health rules and prohibitions, but of data that people can genuinely trust as unsubsidised by lobbying interests. That way we could properly make up our own minds about what to eat, smoke and drink.

Greater openness should be combined with greater sensitivity. The *Lancet*'s editor, Dr Richard Horton, struck the right tone yester-

day when he said: "One needs to disclose the information on which a decision has been made at exactly the same time as the clinical alert comes out. Otherwise one leaves doctors and patients completely in the dark."

The blame for health information failures does not lie solely with the Government. The media also bear some responsibility. Over the past year newspapers and broadcasters have blown up the threat of sensational diseases such as the "killer bug" and of India's plague. In each case news of the infection consumed us for about a week and then disappeared without trace. There will be other such instances even in the coming weeks: the incidence of meningitis is already being reported feverishly even though more than 2,000 people contract (and 150 die) of the disease in any normal year. Likewise, the occasional fatality should not be over-reported, given that 3,000-4,000 people die of the illness even in non-epidemic years.

The media have some incentive for keeping these stories in proportion: a newspaper, for example, that gains the reputation for being absolutely accurate can expect to put on, rather than lose, sales. But competition can put enormous pressure on the truth.

It is for the Government to recognise the atmosphere into which it releases information and the short attention span of the media. Its aim should be to generate light as well as heat. We need less of the nanny, more of the sister or brother.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Elected mayors: visible leaders or puppets on a string?

From Professor R. Hambleton

Sir: Tony Blair is right to seek a full-scale "revival of local government" and he is also right to suggest that directly elected mayors could do much to strengthen local authority leadership ("Blair plan for elected city bosses", 12 December). The elected mayor can offer a platform for strong local leadership, for visible leadership, and for clear accountability – the buck stops here, not in some nameless committee.

Opponents argue that a "strong mayor" results in too much centralisation. However, this is not an argument against an elected mayor; rather, it suggests that there needs to be appropriate checks and balances.

Experience abroad can be helpful to UK local authorities as they rethink their approaches to city leadership and community representation. But we should not be looking to import ready-made solutions; rather, we should be learning from local democracy around the world and adapting successful approaches to the UK situation.

Sale of knives should be banned

From Mr Alan T. Bates

Sir: The murder of hairdresser Philip Lawrence ("Knife curb to follow head-killing", 11 December) and the stabbing to death of a supermarket security guard demonstrate clearly that stronger sentences are needed to punish the carrying of knives. Yet what use will a higher maximum penalty be if judges and magistrates already impose extremely lenient sentences vastly below the legal maximum, or, worse still, the police continue to caution knife-carrying teenagers?

As a 16-year-old student at a reputable public school, I was saddened but not surprised to hear of the recent murders. The carrying of offensive knives by even young teenage males is now almost the norm, in my experience, both as a symbol of strength and for "defence". Some time ago I saw a boy waving two opened flick-knives

To those councillors who fear the elected mayor will take over and they will have no role, I say go to New Zealand, where the last Labour government pushed through massive local government reforms in 1989. You will find elected mayors working closely and effectively with the locally elected councillors.

The challenge is to think through and develop new roles for local councillors which can be introduced alongside bold leadership. This is where the many innovations in decentralised decision-making and management taking place in local authorities across the country can make such an important contribution. UK councils have pioneered decentralised models which are envied abroad.

UK councillors and officers are now asking themselves whether current models of decision-making are right for the 21st century. We need a period of bold innovation and experimentation with local democracy. Strong local leadership must form a part of any programme for reversing the centralisation

around in a changing room before a physical education lesson. He warned me of serious consequences if I were to report the matter, but I did so anyway, expecting firm action to be taken. The school notified the local police who merely cautioned the boy, and I faced harassment at school for several weeks afterwards.

Magistrates, judges, school governors, teachers, police officers and the Government must all realise the need to take a tough stance against all acts of violence, bullying, intimidation and aggression.

Parliament must impose minimum sentences for carrying obviously offensive knives, and the sale of such knives should be banned. The police should carry out more searches, particularly of persons stopped for other matters, and all those who carry knives should be prosecuted.

Yours sincerely,
ALAN T. BATES
Crawley,
West Sussex
11 December

of recent years. This is why Tony Blair's ideas deserve an inventive response.

ROBIN HAMBLETON
Associate Dean
(Research & Development)
Faculty of the Built
Environment
University of the
West of England
Bristol
13 December

From Professor Michael Chisholm

Sir: Before we get too excited about the idea of directly elected mayors as a means for revitalising local government, remember that central government exercise direct and very tight control over more than 90 per cent of each local authority's budget.

A mayor dancing to central government puppet strings will look remarkably like a council doing the same thing. To make local government more genuinely accountable to the local electorate, local authorities must have greater control over their finance. Three reforms

are needed. Reduce the proportion of local government funds derived from central government (currently about 80 per cent). Remove the capping of expenditure. And, third, remove the council tax from public expenditure as defined for control purposes. This is the necessary condition for the first two reforms.

Given the absolute control over local authority borrowing and capital expenditure that exists, there is no macroeconomic justification for the Treasury insisting on controlling the level of council tax. The Audit Commission and other mechanisms exist to ensure that the tax is set at reasonable levels, and if these plus periodic elections are not enough, how about local referenda?

One could cynically say that the proposal for elected mayors is yet another structural diversion while the steady centralisation of power continues.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL CHISHOLM
Cambridge
13 December

Refugees cast as criminals

From Fr Paul Walsh

Sir: The last sentence in Ann Widdecombe's letter (13 December) about proposed government legislation in relation to asylum-seekers in Britain struck me as extraordinarily significant: "Genuine refugees have nothing to fear from our proposals."

In the first place, "genuine refugees" are those who are found to be so by the Home Office. It is the same Home Office that decides which countries are "safe" to return asylum-seekers to. Recent events in Nigeria and Algeria seem to suggest that the Home Office's judgement is not always to be relied upon. The fact that only 1 per cent of applicants from Nigeria are successful in their bid to stay in this country – the largest source of asylum-seekers – is the least successful in passing Home Office rules – would suggest that something more than fair treatment on the basis of each individual case is operating.

Further, it seems that the main driving force of the Government's argument in favour of stopping benefits to asylum-seekers is the presumption of fraud on the part of these people. In my experience of dealing with asylum-seekers (mainly African) in the context of the French-speaking Catholic church in London, the ability of most of these people to give a satisfactory account of the legitimacy of their case on arriving in Britain is highly questionable.

PAUL WALSH
Priest
Notre Dame de France
London, WC2
13 December

Apart altogether from the disorientation, fear and sense of loss attending the circumstances of their leaving their own country, they arrive in a strange place, have no idea what is being said to them (even those who speak French, do so as their second or third language), and have to cope with the double shock of a new culture and a most unexpected suspicious reception. If, on top of this, they are presumed to be trying to cheat their way into Britain, I can only see one probable conclusion.

I, and many members of our congregation, are appalled at the prospect of 12,000-13,000 people finding themselves without housing support and benefits on 8 January – a decision apparently taken on the presumption of mass fraud; we are particularly appalled at the prospect of being part of a society that can, with the passing of a vote, so undermine the lives of so many vulnerable people who have absolutely no say themselves in what is being proposed. I appeal to Ms Widdecombe and to the Government to come and meet some of these people, listen to their stories, and then decide if so many of them are cheating the British taxpayer.

In my experience of dealing with asylum-seekers (mainly African) in the context of the French-speaking Catholic church in London, the ability of most of these people to give a satisfactory account of the legitimacy of their case on arriving in Britain is highly questionable.

Yours sincerely,

PAUL WALSH
Priest
Notre Dame de France
London, WC2
13 December

Judge deserves a knighthood

From Dr Graham Don

Sir: Polly Toynbee's article "Man enough for poisonous porridge" (13 December) makes very depressing reading. I sincerely hope that there is no truth in the rumour that Judge Timmin is to receive no honour for his very distinguished service as our Inspector of Prisons.

I cannot think of any other public servant who has been so universally admired: he has been lauded almost as often as the Home Secretary has been

reviled. Surely a knighthood, at the very least, is called for.

After all, Conservative MPs now get knighted for reasonably regular attendance at the House.

I seem to recall that John Major asked members of the public to suggest names for the honours list. I have today written to him urging that Judge Timmin be suitably rewarded for his distinguished public service and I hope that all your readers who share my view will do likewise.

Yours faithfully,
Graham Don
London, E3

Christians unite on campuses

From The Rev David Kingdon

Sir: Jim Murphy, president of the National Union of Students, comments on the findings of a survey among Oxford students showing that Jesus Christ is the most admired person and the Bible is the most favoured book (report, 11 December). You quote him as saying: "I am surprised and shocked. I have never heard anything like it before."

I am even more surprised at his surprise. Does he not know that on a significant number of campuses the Christian Union is frequently the largest and most active student society?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID P. KINGDON
Theological Books Editor, UK
Inter-Varsity Press
Leicester
12 December

Passengers vote with their feet

From Mr Graham Allen, MP

Sir: Your article on the Transport Select Committee's report on bus deregulation ("MPs give support for 'Obus'", 14 December) described the chaos that has resulted from this failed experiment, but it is also important to note that despite all the predatory practices aimed at securing passengers during peak hours, the number of passengers using local buses has actually fallen by 22 per cent.

If customers are voting with their feet in this way it must be a clear sign to the Government that deregulation does not offer them what they want. Labour will be looking at other options over the coming months in co-operation with the industry including network and route franchising and the use of new technology to enhance service quality.

Yours sincerely,
GRAHAM ALLEN
MP for Nottingham North
(Lab)
House of Commons
London, SW1



DAVID AARONOVITCH

Hard to swallow

I am told by mutual friends that the Princess of Wales is an avid reader of this column. I am not surprised – she is a fellow Cancerian, with a taste in tall, elegant, rich men. Plus we share an affliction: like Diana, I am bimetic, except that after going on an eating binge I manage to hold it in all.

But this control is now threatened. For all this week my gong has been rising as claim and counterclaim about BSE and genetically engineered foods have horrified the nation. Doctor Doom has declared that he never will eat beef again, while Professor Pangloss opines that there really isn't any evidence that humans can catch anything from the meat of infected cattle (I would love to be a fly on the wall when a ravaged Cordelia Cummer, force-fed as a child on ham-burger by her evangelical father, John Selwyn, finally confronts him. The drama will make Ibsen's *Ghosts* look like a Ray Cooney production).

It was the sheep that went barry first, eating trees, attacking dogs and baaing in tongues. The enlightened farming community responded to this by feeding them in ground-up form to their cattle. Pretty soon cows were going mad all over Britain, stopping about on wobbly legs like a middle manager at an office party. The answer was obvious: grind them up and feed them to us.

Then the scare started – which was how we discovered what actually went into ham-burgers, sausages and mince. Not 100 per cent pure beefsteak – all nice and red and white like in the ads – but cheeks, chops, tail, bowel and bollocks – things you wouldn't let into your compost heap, let alone into your stomach. And even those wonderful prime sirloin joints turned out to have nerve endings in them that could have carried (says Doctor Doom) infection from the brains of the maddened bovines. Which is why beef sales have dropped by 25 per cent in Britain as a whole – and (I bet) by 99 per cent to readers of the *Independent*. Beefless Britain sits back and breathes a sigh of relief.

The trouble is that you can't

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Violence is not a knife in the hand. It grows, like a poison tree, inside people who, unlike themselves, have not learnt to value other human beings – Frances Lawrence, widow of murdered headmaster Philip, in a letter to his pupils

I hope you won't think I am being a nuisance but I have changed my mind as to what I want for Christmas. I wanted to have a telescope but now I want to have my daddy back because without my daddy I will not be able to see the stars anyway – Lucien Lawrence, eight, writing to Father Christmas

My government is taking part in this agreement without enthusiasm ... will this truly materialise or remain a piece of paper? – Alija Izetbegovic, Bosnian president, signing the peace treaty in Paris

The Brixton police are killers and they will not understand what they have done until one of them has been killed – Rudy Narayan, Civil Rights UK campaigner, in a speech just before the Brixton riot

It wasn't Brixton that rioted, it was a small minority of thugs and criminals who as ever look for an opportunity to embark on criminal exercises – Sir Paul Condon, Metropolitan Police Commissioner

Keeping the heat under his hat

From Mr Owen Surridge

Sir: Subterfuge is part of the armoury of every foreign correspondent, as I am sure Angus Roxburgh, the BBC's Moscow resident, is aware (Letters: "Hats off to the BBC's heads", 13 December).

It is no good railing at his masters' bare-heads' edict, cocooned as they are in centrally heated offices. What he needs is a wig, preferably made of fur of the same colour as his hair.

Obey the letter of the law, Mr Roxburgh, and keep the spirit under your "hat".

Yours warmly,
OWEN SURRIDGE
London, NW3
14 December

The Nativity', Roger van der Weyden (1576

INDEPENDENT • Saturday 16 December 1995

BUSINESS NEWS DESK tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

Engineering setback: British giant's profits plummet as biggest shareholder quells rumours that it is losing patience

Trafalgar's £321m loss stuns City

TOM STEVENSON
Deputy City Editor

Trafalgar House stunned the City yesterday with a much bigger loss than even the gloomiest forecasters had expected. Long-suffering shareholders in Trafalgar, which owns the QE2 and until recently London's Ritz hotel, were dealt a further blow with the news that neither ordinary nor preference dividends will be paid until the group is making "sustainable profits" again.

The £321m loss for the year to September, compared with a £46m profit in the previous 12 months, included £204m of one-off reorganisation costs and asset write-downs and capped a disastrous year for one of the great names of British engineering. Hong Kong Land, the company's largest shareholder, issued a statement of support to quell persistent rumours that it was losing patience with its ill-conceived investment.

Simon Kewstow, chairman of Trafalgar, said: "The board has determined to take vigorous action to tackle all the problems that have beset Trafalgar House in the past. A full turnaround requires a culture change and will not be brought about overnight."

One of the stock market's worst performers in 1995,

Trafalgar's shares fell a further 2.5p to 24.5p yesterday, valuing the whole company at only £2.64m despite its sales of almost £4bn. Since the beginning of the year, they have slumped from a high of 76p. In 1987, when they peaked at 331p.

At the current level, the company is valued at less than Hong Kong Land paid for its 26 per cent stake in 1992 when it chose Trafalgar as its vehicle for expansion outside the colony.

Yesterday, the company, the colony's largest group, said it had full confidence in Trafalgar's management, adding that it remained a long-term investor. It warned, however, that its share of the loss would result in a significant reduction in profits for 1995.

Higgs & Hill warns on profits

The construction group Higgs & Hill said it expected to make between 40 to 50 redundancies in its construction division as part of a major overhaul of its building operations, writes Magnus Grimond.

The group, which employs around 800 in its contracting and construction arm, will also make a £2.5m provision to cover the cost of the reorganisation which will also include some of

Analysts were wrong-footed by the size of the reported loss because many expected that borrowing covenants based on Trafalgar's net asset value would ensure that any loss for the year was capped at £200m. The company said yesterday it had renegotiated covenants dependent on the ratio of borrowings to shareholders' funds that were less onerous.

Trafalgar's bombshell contained a litany of catastrophic statistics. Borrowings grew 10-fold during the year, the value of the company's net assets halved from £699m to £355m and Nigel Rich, chief executive for the past 15 months, warned the cash haemorrhage would continue this year with at least another £100m flowing out.

The massive loss follows a year in which Trafalgar failed in its bid to buy Northern Electric for £1.2bn and lived through a public relations fiasco after a cruise on the luxury QE2 cruise liner saw passengers travelling to the US in far from ideal circumstances while a bodge fit was completed.

Included in the exceptional charges was a £31m provision to cover "a radical programme of change" at Cunard, £8m to refund passengers whose cruises were ruined and £79m to provide against a write-down of the value of the fleet. Even before these one-off charges, an operating loss of £16m was struck against profits last time of £28m as occupancy levels and rates per berth sold failed to match

expectations. Although Trafalgar admitted that further asset disposals would be required to reduce borrowings, there was no indication as to which part of the wide-ranging empire would be up for sale. Cunard is thought to be unsaleable until its deep-seated problems are sorted out and it is closer to profitability which, the company, warned might take three or four years.

Other immediately saleable operations include Ideal Homes, the housebuilding arm that increased profits from £19m to £28.4m and represents one of the few successful activities within the group. Trafalgar said it would be pulling out of its less attractive US householding operations. The other main drag on the group came in the engineering operations where heavy losses at the 1991 acquisition Davy, contract problems in power engineering and continuing red ink at Sofresid, the French subsidiary, dragged the division into a £110m loss even before £65m of restructuring charges.

Mr Rich said that the company was still working through contracts - written in the early 1990s - that committed Trafalgar to contractual liabilities without providing any protection against subcontractors who underperformed.

Comment page 19

Goal agrees Canadian takeover bid

Worries over Granada share price

Market Report: Scottish banks dance a jig

19

19

20

CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR, JEREMY WARNER

New rules signal TV takeover battles

NIC CICUTI

Media experts yesterday predicted a bitter TV takeover war once new rules relaxing ownership of Britain's television companies come into effect.

Among those tipped to become predators for some of the smaller ITV companies were Carlton Communications, which already owns Central and has stakes in Meridian and GMTV, Granada, which owns LWT, and MAI, which controls Meridian and Anglia.

They will all be able to expand their empires significantly once the new Broadcasting Bill, announced yesterday by Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, becomes law in early 1997.

Share prices in their likely targets rose dramatically in anticipation of takeovers. Ulster TV added almost £100m to its £1.3bn market value as shares in the company rose 65p to £10.23. The value of HTV, also seen by some analysts as a potential bidder for Border TV, rose by about £25m to about £260m, as shares rose from 26p to 30.2p. Grampian was up 16p to 21.9p, adding £5m to the TV company's £66m value.

Likely predators' share prices remained flat or slipped slightly. Carlton was down 17p to 95p, partly on renewed speculation of a bid for United Newspapers, owners of the Express titles, while MAI fell 9p to 310.5 pence. However, a Carlton Communications spokesman described the proposed Bill as "very good news for the industry".

The Heritage Secretary's Bill proposes to remove the limit of two licences for any one ITV company. The new limit will be a 15 per cent share of the total television audience.

The Bill is seen by many analysts as more generous towards companies such as Carlton and Granada than had been anticipated. Anthony de Larriba, a media analyst at Panmure Gordon, said: "Using audience share rather than advertising was a more attractive assessment of limits."

What this means is that companies in London and the South East areas will be given more headroom to grow their operations, giving Carlton the opportunity to expand its business. I would have thought that Yorkshire Tees would be a likely target from either Granada or MAI, although that may have to involve a break-up of the YTT company to comply with the 15 per cent rule.

Granada may be out of the running because it already controls the Granada and LWT franchises, is moving into satellite TV and also has its hands full with its £3.3bn Forte bid.

BT plans phone bills shake-up

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

BT yesterday moved a step closer to offering radically new tariffs to its customers, which would include higher line rentals in exchange for lower call charges.

Among the options believed to be under study is an offer of free local calls, though probably restricted to certain off-peak times. The company will also be able to tailor tariffs to customers' usage, for example heavy users of long distance or international calls.

The moves emerged as Don Cruickshank, the telecoms regulator, announced the next step in consultations on the removal of price limits on BT's line rental charges, an essential first step to a wider range of tariffs.

As a result, BT is expected to propose at least three new residential tariffs. One would have rental and call charges increasing by no more than inflation from current levels. The others would have higher rentals, in two stages up to about £30 a quarter, but with call charges 20 to 25 per cent lower than now.

BT would be entitled to take this further and offer free local calls, although telecoms specialists believe it is more likely to offer free or very cheap local calls only at off-peak periods. The move is regarded by BT as vital to its campaign to slow the flight of customers to cable companies, which are already taking 50,000 a month and eating into BT's 95 per cent market share.

The announcement by Mr Cruickshank that he is starting the statutory consultation period on the line rental proposals, came a day after a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report cleared the way for customers to take their telephone numbers with them when they move to BT's competitors.

This is expected to be a big boost to the cable companies, and BT is anxious to put more marketing weapons in its armoury to fight them.

Mr Cruickshank said it was appropriate for him to lift the cap on line rentals, giving BT the freedom to adopt a "more imaginative approach" to the way it prices services, particularly for residential customers.

BT will have to offer falls in call charges to offset any increase in line rentals. Mr Cruickshank said BT had told him that it would structure the packages so customer, for a given level of usage, would see any real increase in their bill, and most would see reductions.

But he warned that BT would have to launch a big media campaign to help customers understand what was being proposed. And BT would still have to achieve overall price reductions of around £400m a year under the current price control system.

Customers in BT's light user scheme, who do not use their telephones much, would be guaranteed no real increase in their bills, Mr Cruickshank said.

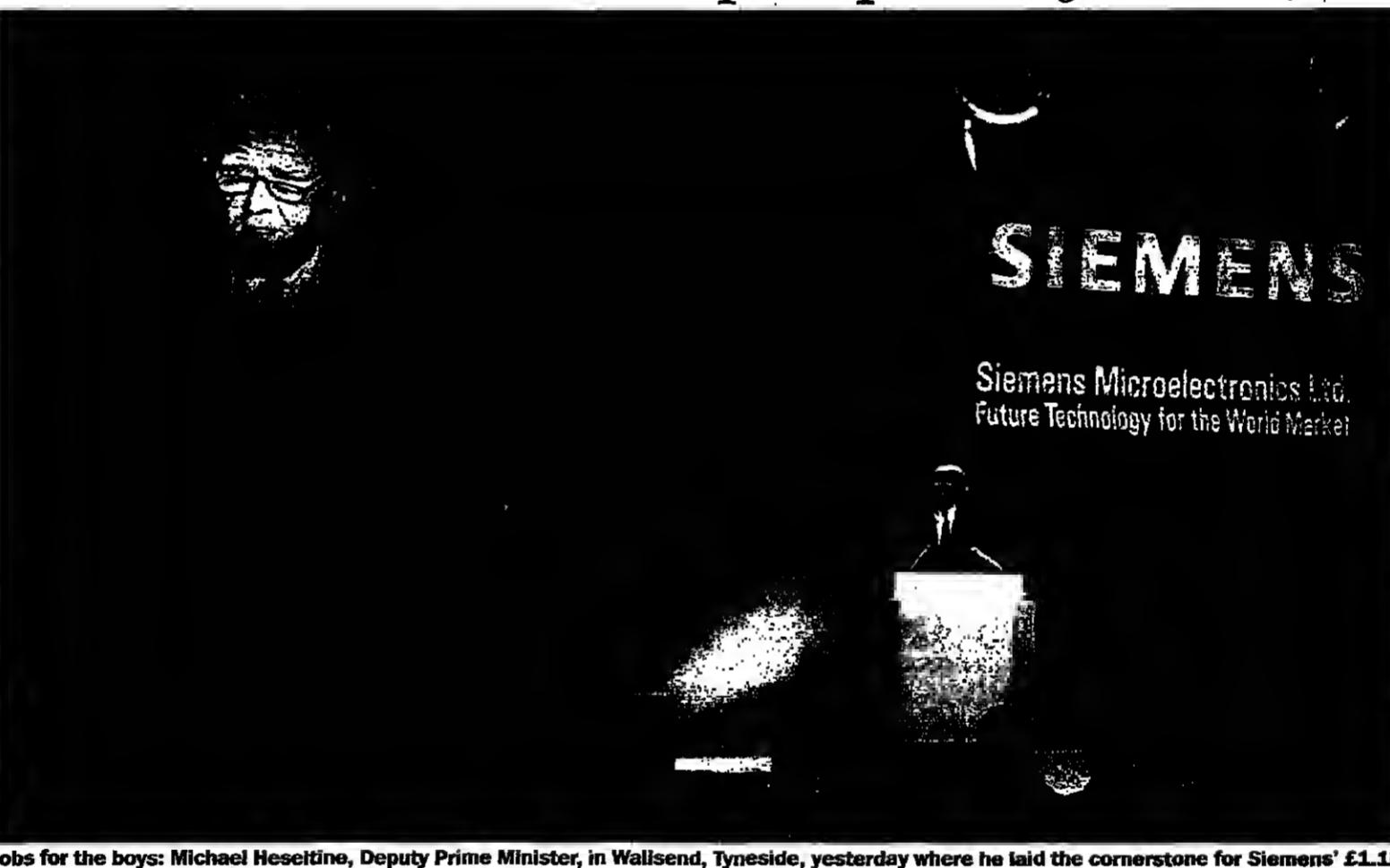
BT said that it wanted to sell not just on price but on quality and variety of service.

Mr Cruickshank said that an indirect benefit of removing the cap on line rentals, which restricts increases to the rate of inflation plus 2 per cent, is that he will abandon the "Access Deficit Contribution" charging regime, a mechanism used to channel money between telecoms operators.

Mercury said Mr Cruickshank's plans to end access deficit contributions would come too late to prevent claims from BT for "a whole range of unreasonable costs, the most extraordinary of these being the funding of a campaign to win back customers from Mercury."

Comment, page 19

Siemens' £1.1bn stake in chips to provide jobs for 1,800



Jobs for the boys: Michael Heseltine, Deputy Prime Minister, in Wallsend, Tyneside, yesterday where he laid the cornerstone for Siemens' £1.1bn microchip factory that will eventually provide jobs for 1,800

Photograph: Paul Vincent/Reuters

Bonds surge as France cuts rates

PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

The French bond market rallied as the Bank of France yesterday lowered interest rates and striking railway workers voted to return to work. But with fresh signs of weakness in France's main trading partner, Germany, analysts warned that the flagging French economy might not recover even with further rate cuts.

A sombre report warned that the French banking system was in a state of depression.

Bonds surged in response to the easing in monetary policy, with the yield on long-dated stock falling by almost 10 basis points. The franc strengthened by a centime against the mark

to close at 3.44, but the stock market lost some of the gains it had made on Thursday with the CAC-40 index ending 16 points down at 1859.25.

The Bank of France cut the intervention rate, which sets a floor to money market rates, from 4.7 to 4.45 per cent. Jean-Claude Trichet, governor of France's main trading partner, Germany, analysts warned that the flagging French economy might not recover even with further rate cuts.

With the intervention rate still 70 basis points above the new German repo rate of 3.75 per cent, analysts said there was scope for a further reduction of half a per cent. Until the currency crisis of the spring, the

French central bank had maintained a margin of 20 basis points above the repo rate.

"But even the interest rate cuts that are possible won't be enough to revive the economy," warned Julian Jessop, economist at HSBC Markets, which is projecting growth of about 1.5 per cent next year.

As a result, he said, the budget deficit next year could be as high as 4.7 per cent rather than the 4 per cent targeted by the French government. This would make it unlikely that France could conform with the criterion of 3 per cent or less in 1997 set by the Maastricht Treaty for eligibility to monetary union.

An extremely sharp decline in west German manufacturing

orders in October suggested that France was unlikely to receive much stimulus from an early pick-up in the stalled German economy. Total orders fell 4.5 per cent in October.

On the brighter side, a survey of business confidence in western Germany by IFO for November showed the first rise in confidence since May.

The need for steps to revive the French economy was highlighted by a pessimistic report about the health of French banks from AFB, the French banking association. Net banking income had fallen 6 per cent in 1994 and 7 per cent in the first half of 1995 - a nosedive unprecedented since the war.

Mortgage blow to borrowers

NIC CICUTI

claim by Iain Brown, the borrower and a former Woolwich employee, that he should not be liable for the full £73,000 debt because he was the legal beneficiary of the indemnity policy.

At a hearing earlier this month, specifically called to test the law on this issue, the Court heard that Mr Brown borrowed almost £88,000 on a 100 per cent mortgage to buy a house in 1988.

Woolwich lent him the money on condition that he pay for an indemnity policy to the value of some £22,000, a quarter of the loan's value.

Mr Brown fell behind in his payments and his debt mounted to £125,000. The house was repossessed about 2 years ago and eventually sold for £52,000, leaving £73,000 outstanding.

Frank Bartlett, head of lending at the Woolwich Society, which brought the case, is legally entitled to claim the full amount of £73,000 to be owed by it for a former borrower.

The judge ruled that although he paid for the policy, he was not the beneficiary of it.

The judgment dismissed a

claim by Iain Brown, the borrower and a former Woolwich employee, that he should not be liable for the full £73,000 debt because he was the legal beneficiary of the indemnity policy.

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over bid
share price
banks dance
in



COMMENT

The danger is that the continuing cash haemorrhage (another £100m will slip away this year) will necessitate the sale of the remaining jewels – even Cunard is only being fattened up for market.

It has been quite a month for *kitchen sink* accounting, the well-worn management technique of blaming it all on the previous regime, lobbing in a harrowload of provisions and hoping to hell you've done enough to create a solid floor for earnings growth. The extent of restructuring provisions at NFC and Laporte surprised the market, but nothing could have prepared it for the bombshell Trafalgar House dropped yesterday.

Arguably when the market is expecting you to lose £200m, another £120m is neither here nor there, so it was little surprise that the shares, an unqualified disaster over the past 10 years or so, slipped just 2p to 24.5p. More of a weary shrug than the outrage that might have been expected.

Even so, the picture Nigel Rich paints of the company he is inheriting as chief executive 15 months ago is an extremely worrying one. There appears to have been a complete absence of communication between the centre and the provinces and an unwillingness to co-operate when head-office walls descended from on high to disturb the glorious isolation subsidiaries had previously enjoyed.

The Davy and Sofresid acquisitions in the early 1990s were left, it appears, to run themselves with no attempt being made to integrate the new operations in the group as a whole or to instil any new disciplines or reporting systems. Hardly any wonder, cyn-

ics note, when there weren't any to pass on in the first place.

What Mr Rich is faced with at Trafal is a group in complete disarray, rightly named Britain's worst-managed company in a recent business magazine poll.

His problem is that changing a whole corporate culture is difficult enough at the best of times. Changing it at the worst of times, when markets are dire, cash-flow weak, borrowings high, morale low and shareholders restive, becomes infinitely more so.

In that regard he does have the advantage of an investor register so pummelled with bad news over the past three years, so weakened by dipping deep for rights issue funds to flush down the drain, that in terms of sentiment things can only get better. Even Hongkong Land, which has paid more for a quarter of the company than the whole is now worth, issued a grudging vote of support yesterday.

There are some good businesses in the group, notably Ideal Homes, the house-builder.

The danger is that the continuing cash haemorrhage (another £100m will slip away this year) will necessitate the sale of the remaining jewels – even Cunard is only being fattened up for market.

That will leave nothing but a collection of dull, low-margin engineering and construction businesses, struggling in highly competitive markets. Not exactly what the Keswicks had in mind.

More over, the liberalised rules on media cross-ownership, first unveiled in the form of a White Paper earlier this year, will allow all but the biggest national newspaper groups to buy terrestrial broadcasters – limited, again, to 15 per cent of the total television audience. At the same time, broadcasters will be able to buy national newspapers (if any want to), if they don't exceed 20 per cent of the national market.

For ITV companies, at any rate, there will be plenty of potential buyers, and big mixed-media companies are bound to emerge. That is no doubt a good thing. After all, the commercial television market in the UK as it stands is too fragmented to allow real "national champions" to develop. Now there is every chance of creating much stronger companies.

So much for the past – traditional TV. What about the future? The Government apparently believes that its liberal stance on digital terrestrial TV, along with its promise to award licences to those who contract to roll out their digital services quickly, is enough to ensure its success. In fact, the only thing that will power digital TV is programming – sport and movies above all. Why would consumers pay extra for a black box if they don't get something new?

Here's the rub. All the good programming is already tied up – by BSkyB. Moreover, Sky has ambitious plans to offer digital satellite within a year, and up to 200 channels of it at that, enough to plaster sports, children's programming, films, drama, US sitcoms and pay-per-view boxing matches across the screen 24 hours a day. Unbelievably, it will also be able to bid as both operator and provider for a significant share of total DTT services. Can others compete against this mighty onslaught? It is hard to see how, other than as niche players.

Regulator mops BT's bloody nose

What the regulator gives with one hand, he takes away with the other. Don Cruickshank's decision to begin the next stage of liberalisation in BT's tariff structure came the day after he gave the company a bloody nose on number portability. A coincidence, no doubt, but perhaps the telecoms regulator was feeling magnanimous for a change. Portability takes away some of BT's monopoly strength by removing a serious obstacle to signing up with a competitor.

Abandoning the cap on rental will allow BT to fight back against the encroachment of cable by offering a menu of different charging structures – free local calls, perhaps, in exchange for a high fixed charge. Such flexibility will help BT to slow its loss of customers – and it may even bring some back.

North Sea Oil: Canadian takeover will create key player

Goal accepts £131m bid from Talisman

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Goal Petroleum, one of the original band of independent UK companies set up to exploit North Sea oil reserves, has agreed a £131m bid from the Canadian group Talisman Energy. The offer, pitched at 97.5p cash per share, sent Goal's shares up 4.5p to 96.5p yesterday, having already soared from 68p on Tuesday when the company alerted the market that bid talks were underway.

The takeover looked all-but-sewn up after two of Goal's biggest shareholders – with 15.5 per cent of the shares – gave undertakings to accept the Talisman offer. Norwich Union has pledged its 29 per cent stake to the Talisman offer even if a higher offer emerges. Mercury Asset Management, with around 16 per cent, has also given an irrevocable undertaking, but is still free to accept a rival bid.

Talisman, which until 1992

was a Canadian offshoot of British Petroleum known as BP Canada, is already two or three times the size of Goal in the North Sea. But analysts believe the acquisition will create a North Sea player on a par with substantial existing British groups like Premier Consolidated Oilfields and Monument Oil & Gas.

Goal brings UK production of around 20,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day – roughly two-thirds the level of Talisman's – and is expected to maintain output over the next two years. Analysts believe that will deliver strong earnings and cash flow, and point to a portfolio of low risk assets. The majority of its producing fields are operated by British Petroleum, and have been at the forefront of its drive to cut costs. It also has extensive exploration acreage.

Duncan Ritchie, Goal managing director, denied that the offer had been accepted because of any hidden problems at the company. "This was a very good offer... a golden opportunity to deliver value to shareholders", he said.

In September, the company announced pre-tax profits lifted from £3.5m to £6.8m for the six months to June. Originally Gas & Oil Acreage Ltd, it was set up by merchant bankers Morgan Grenfell as one of a number of small companies established in the early 1970s to allow direct investment in the North Sea oil bonanza, then in its infancy.

It was one of the original partners in the consortium which discovered the Buchan field in the North Sea and also took a 5 per cent interest in Wytch Farm, the UK's biggest onshore oil field in Dorset. Morgan Grenfell bailed out in the mid-1980s as part of its assets reshuffle at the time of the shake-up in the City associated with Big Bang.



Goal was one of the first companies set up to cash in on the UK offshore oil boom

Kvaerner dumping threat

Kvaerner stepped up the pressure on Amec shareholders yesterday, hinting it may dump its shareholding if it loses its £360m bid battle for the group, writes Magnus Grimond.

The share slipped 2.5p to 96p – 4p below Kvaerner's offer – as more institutional shareholders voted with their feet ahead of the Monday lunchtime close. Norwich Union sold its 2.6 per cent stake in the market and said it immediately snapped up by the bidder, taking its stake to 26.1 per cent.

Erik Tunseth, Kvaerner president and chief executive, said he believed they would succeed on Monday, but if they did not, Kvaerner would pursue other options. "In deciding whether or not to accept our offer, shareholders should not assume we will be either a supportive or a long-term minority holder of Amec."

But Amec hit back at Kvaerner's attempt to use "veiled and ambiguous threats" to bully shareholders into accepting its cut-price offer. Sir Alan Cockshaw, chairman, said the bidder was still trying to divert attention from the real arguments and continued to advise shareholders to reject the bid.

The outcome is likely to be finely balanced, turning on the attitude of 14 per cent shareholder PDM and small shareholders.

IN BRIEF

£180m payout from Yorkshire Electricity

Yorkshire Electricity confirmed a £180m special dividend, taking its handout in a year above £700m. The £4 a share payout is nearly 70 per cent more than the 240p flotation price when the company was privatised five years ago.

Yorkshire also announced interim pre-tax profits up 13.3 per cent to £110.6m and a 10 per cent increase in dividends to 9.9p. Yorkshire – in partnership with three other regional electricity companies – is drawing up plans to reduce the cost of the move to full competition for 20 million domestic customers in 1998, expected to be some £750m.

Steel producers urge veto on Irish aid

Tim Eggar, the industry minister, was urged by Dr Swraj Paul, president of the British Iron and Steel Producers Association, to use Britain's veto to block "illegal and unjustifiable" state subsidies to Irish Steel.

Liffe clinches Chicago deal

Liffe, the international futures exchange, and the Chicago Board of Trade signed an historic agreement finalising the open outcry linkage between the two exchanges. The launch date for the trading of the first two contracts on the two exchanges will be the second quarter of 1996.

Dresdner adds US fund manager

Dresdner Bank of Germany has acquired RCM Capital Management, the US fund manager, from Travelers Group for £200m. RCM, which has £17bn in funds under management, is to become the main US vehicle for Dresdner's global investment management ambitions. With a total of £13bn in funds under management, Dresdner is one of the largest asset managers in Europe.

Electra beats index

Electra Investment Trust announced a 15.7 per cent rise in net assets in the year to September compared to a 14.7 per cent rise in the FTSE All Share index over the same period.

The outperformance continued a trend over the past three years during which Electra's adjusted net assets have increased by 58 per cent compared with a 44 per cent rise in the market as a whole. During the year Robert Fleming acquired a 50 per cent stake in Electra Kingsway, the management, resulting in a one-off capital gain of £6.4m for Electra.

Granada share price fall raises bid fears

JOHN SHEPHERD

Granada's share price fell a further 3p to 63.2p yesterday, raising fresh concern about its ability to increase its £3.3bn take-over bid for Forte's hotels group.

The fall means that Granada's share price is in effect below the 62.5p that the bid has been underwritten by BZW, Hoare Govett and Lazard Bros. Granada recently announced a 7.9p dividend, which implies an

underlying share price of 62.41p.

Granada's shares are hovering just 1.33p above the cash alternative factored into the bid. The main offer is four Granada shares, plus £23.50p cash for every 15 Forte shares, which yesterday rose 2p to 331.5p.

Shares in Granada have plunged more than 60p since the bid was launched. On the bid's first day the cash and equity offer valued each Forte share at 339p against 325.2p today.

One leading leisure analyst said: "It is very difficult to raise a takeover offer when the share price goes below the underwriting level. However, it is still early days."

Gerry Robinson, chief executive of Granada who normally does not work on Friday's, flew to Dublin yesterday to whip up support among Irish institutional shareholders.

Before he departed from London's City Airport, he attacked yesterday's latest

missive from Forte which claimed that the document published by Granada on Thursday was "a transparent attempt to prop up its own falling share price".

Mr Robinson countered, and said Forte's latest document "is lightweight and is not going to impress anyone. There is not a word about profits or cash generation, let alone dividends. They seem to be just going through the motions to deflect attention from their own failings."

Sir Rocco Forte, chairman and chief executive of Forte, said: "Granada has failed to demonstrate any commercial logic for this deal." Granada's claim that it could boost Forte's profits by over £100m was described as "astonishing".

Mr Robinson said, however, that "the fact Forte thinks its plan to improve its profits by £100m per annum is 'astonishing' says it all". Only 1.5 per cent of Forte's shareholders have accepted so far.



An important message to AMEC's Shareholders.

AMEC's defence against Kvaerner's offers.

To hear

your own Board's view,
telephone 0800 77 11 77.

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market report/shares

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100
3,642.6 - 29.0

FT-SE 250
3,959.8 - 1.9

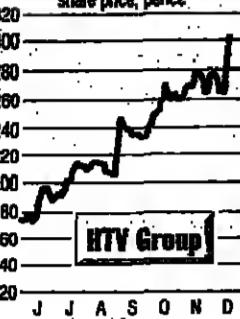
FT-SE 350
1,806.4 - 11.5

SEAO VOLUME
861m shares,
28,208 bargains

Gilt Index
96.10 + 0.05

SHARE SPOTLIGHT

share price, pence



J J A S O N D

Scottish banks do a Highland fling on takeover hopes

Scotland's two independent clearing banks again created much of the stock market action. As takeover rumours swirled, shares of Royal Bank of Scotland surged 35.5p, closing 22p higher at 608p in busy trading. And Bank of Scotland ended 16.5p stronger at 306.5p.

The Royal Bank moved to try and quash the takeover speculation.

It was not, it declared, "in discussions with any potential bidder". Yet it refused to say it had received an approach.

The market has caught the scent of takeover action and after such a strong display it would be foolish to dismiss the speculation.

In the growing internationalism of the banking community the two Scottish banks look increasingly vulnerable and there is a school of thought that they would be much safer if they were united.

HSBC, the old Hong Kong



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN
Stock market reporter
of the year

the Government back-tracked on its ownership limit, opening the way for more takeover bids in the industry.

All the likely candidates jumped: Border added 27p to

245p, HTV 33p to 302p,

Grampian 16p to 219p, Scottish 22p to 491p and Ulster 68p

to 1,023p.

Kirkshire & Tyne-Tees TV, where MAI is seen as a likely

predator, jumped 92p to 698p.

MAI, the financial group

which controls Anglia TV, fell

9p to 310.5p. Carlton Com-

munications, another likely

to be a bidder, lost 17p to 959p.

BSkyB fell 9.5p to 415p.

Granada was caught in the

action. It was pulled back with

the other large TV groups, leaving the shares, allowing for a declared dividend payment, at 632p, just below the un-derwritten price of its hostile bid for Forte.

Once again shares reached a new trading peak before losing their glitter. But for the first time this week they ended in negative territory, with the FT-SE 100 index of 29 points to 3,642.

Talk of a big programme

and institutional selling in the futures market of the

March contract, caused much

of the discomfort.

Global Petroleum added 4.5p

to 96.5p as Canadian group Ia-

siman Energy emerged as the

bidder, offering £131m or

97.5p a share.

AMEC, the construction group, fell 2.5p to 96p. The offer from Kværner closes on Monday and the indications suggest the Norwegian take-over will succeed.

Amstrad rallied after chair-

man Alan Sugar spoke out.

The shares have fallen from

283p since he talked about

tough trading conditions. He

said there had been no "sig-

nificant" change since his state-

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283

sport

To lose one manager may be considered unfortunate, to lose two in a year suggests someone is trying to tell you something

On Wednesday night, as he chipped and drilled, headed and flicked, and drove the Irish defence to distraction, you could almost feel the intake of breath across Europe at the performance of Patrick Kluivert. "All kill," Ruud Gullit called him. And he was right. It is not just Tony Adams who will be losing sleep at the thought of facing his pace, his control, his ease next summer. Paulo Maldini will be too, that's how good he is.

At 19, Kluivert is a terrifying prospect. If Stan Collymore fetches £8.5m, imagine what Kluivert is worth, imagine what confidence it must engender in a team having him in front of you, imagine how happy you would now be if you had a month ago, put a tenner on the Netherlands to win the European Championship at 16-1. In short, imagine what, this year, every Pre-

mership manager would like their true love to give them on the first day of Christmas: a Kluivert in the youth team.

Few, sadly, will get one (except perhaps Alex Ferguson, who appears intent on ensuring the contract of every promising young player in the country is in his back pocket by the end of the festive season). Instead most managers' Christmas cheer will consist of future indigestion and points-loss hangover. But if anyone was looking for present ideas for the stockings of the year's sporting heroes, here are a few suggestions.

Mark George, chairman of Leicester City could use a pair of manacles. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde: to lose one manager may be considered unfortunate, to lose two in a year suggests someone is trying to tell you something.

Steve Stone, England's unpaired-by-hair midfield dynamo, would appreciate a new name. Thus sparing him – and us – of the awful tabloid headlines which accompany his regular heroics: "Stone Me", "Precious Stone", and the most recent "Stoned In Love With You", which was clearly composed by someone who was at the time. Shearer might be a good name. Then at least Terry Venables would be able to boast of one Shearer who can score for England.

The man, the stone has leapt-frogged over into the national team – David Batty and Graeme Le Saux might benefit from a copy of the latest UN ceasefire proposals for Bosnia signed in Paris this week, with all its practical suggestions about how not to invade each other's defensible space. Or alternatively, a

contract with Frank Warren. Or maybe just a transfer. There are a lot of things Terry Venables himself would want at the moment, not least a catastrophic collapse in the fortunes of Italian and Polish football. But as a big expo-

nent of using the ball during training sessions, he would be particularly thrilled with a couple of extra balls to kick around the Bisham Abbey grass. Harry Harris's preferably.

What do you give a man worth £15m? Well, Ken Bates's Chelsea shareholding would not go amiss in Matthew Harding's pillow case. Short of that, a controlling interest in a club no one else wants to own might make his life easier. Brighton, perhaps, or Hull City. And on the subject of big money, Rob Andrew, presently in control of Newcastle Rugby Club, a large amount of Sir John Hall's cash and a team that no one wants to join, would be grateful for anyone capable of executing an efficient crash-tackle on an opponent clean through in a scoring position. Luke Miklosko would do.

At Middlesbrough Football Club, a North-eastern institution better able to attract incoming talent, the transfer sensation of the year has bedded in far better than was predicted. It was assumed Juninho would freeze up in the cold easterlies sweeping in direct from the Urals, but he has hardly flinched. No point giving him gloves, then, particularly as he seems to have arrived in England loaded down with thermals, knitted in advance by anxious members of his extended family. But the industrial air of his new home town has played havoc with his complexion: some of Stephen Hendry's left-over Clearasil would be gratefully received.

In motor racing Murray Walker would be equally cheerful for a job (Rory Bremner would be relieved if Walker got one too); Damon Hill

could use a new excuse; and Michael Schumacher a decent opponent. And in cricket, a laser range-finder in Devon Malcolm's stocking might cut down on injuries in the stands; while Brian Lara could do with a bit of practice; and Mark Ramprakash would love a long run in the England team. Well just one run, actually.

And elsewhere, Will Carling would find life easier if given a year's membership of a men-only gym; we would all be grateful were Eric Hall to receive another word to replace his ever-present "monster" ("prat" would do); and Jeff Jarman, after his petulant outburst at Wimbledon should be given a night out with Duncan Ferguson, Eric Cantona and Julian Dicks. With Denis Wise tagging along to order the cab home.

Tyson expects to advance in his grand plan

Ken Jones reports from Philadelphia on a former world heavyweight champion whose speed should be decisive tonight

The impression Mike Tyson has brought to bear on his contest against Buster Mathis Jnr tonight at the Spectrum in Philadelphia is that it will be one without educational value.

If with a slip of the tongue, even Don King admits it, "Mike has trained brilliantly for this one – er two – rounds," the Barnum of boxing said switching to smile mode at yesterday's weigh-in.

King who remains under federal indictment on insurance fraud charges has tried just about every trick including dressing up as Uncle Sam and posing with a Benjamin Franklin look-alike – "Don got the idea for his hair when I flew my kite through a thunderstorm" – to hype the fight on television commercials but the City of Brotherly Love has rejected his sales pitch, citizens taking up fewer than 6,000 of 18,400 tickets. "I've brought them the world's greatest fighter, so what do they want from me?" King laments.

Not to be taken for a ride is more or less the answer. "King thought Philadelphia fans were a bunch of suckers who would pay \$300 (£195) to watch Tyson fight a washerwoman," listeners to a local radio sports station were informed this week.

Business is so bad that King is reduced to peddling T-shirts bearing the promotional title "Presumption of Innocence", a dig at the New Jersey gaming commission who put paid to the fight taking place in Atlantic City on account of his indictment. Denying that he sought city and state tax favours in Philadelphia ("I continue to perform in spite of all the shackles put on me") is presently King's favourite theme.

TALE OF THE TAPE

Tyson v Mathis Jnr

29	Age	25
15st 6lb	Weight	16st 0lb
5ft 11in	Height	6ft 0in
71in	Reach	78in
Chest		
43-45a (normal/expended) 43-44a		
16in	Biceps	16in
24in	Forearm	22in
19in	Neck	16in
8in	Wrist	7in
43	Fights	20
42	Wins	20
1	Losses	0
0	No decision	2
36	Stoppages	6
19	First round stoppages	1

The trouble is that of Tyson's comeback against Peter McNeeley in the Nevada desert last August, when just the prospect of detonation was enough to guarantee a full house, has worn off. It no longer existed by the time Tyson and Mathis were due to meet in Las Vegas six weeks ago. When

Tyson's damaged thumb caused a late postponement, Mathis with whom he has a six-fight promotional contract worth more than \$30m had unloaded fewer than 2,000 tickets. It was suspected that he withdrew for financial rather than medical reasons.

Similar difficulties have arisen in Philadelphia, once one of the great fight towns and represented historically by such notable heavyweight champions as Joe Frazier and Sonny Liston. Local interest in boxing may have declined considerably since Frazier's great battles with Muhammad Ali but the people of Philadelphia can still identify a mis-match when they see one.

However when Mayor Ed Rendell publicly asked King to consider scaling down ticket prices that range from \$25 to \$500 ringside, it could be imagined that the great manipulator thought him to be a suitable case for treatment. King's only concession was to include underprivileged inner-city youth on his guest list. "Don't miss this chance of seeing the world's greatest heavyweight," he keeps trumpeting.

Even the weigh-in, normally a King promotional bonanza, fell flat. Mathis refusing to remove the voluminous black sweat shirt that concealed his wide hips and large rump. He did not engage Tyson's intimidation stare either.

There are no disparate evaluations of Mathis; qualified ob-

servers consider him to be of average technique but such a soft-shouldered puncher that it will come as great surprise if he manages to keep Tyson at bay for more than a couple of rounds.

It is generally agreed that to go against Tyson without power and an advantage in height is asking for trouble. No wonder Mathis's mother, the widow of prizefighter, worries about her son. "Don't get hurt," she told him.

An interesting thing is that

both men were brought on by the Cus D'Amato method of throwing punches to numbered instructions. "That will make it an interesting fight tactically," said Tyson's chief trainer, Jay Bright, who in truth merely responds to his brooding employer's wishes. A more realistic conclusion is that Mathis could not be fancied even if he was allowed to use a trident and a net.

Weighing in at 219lb to Mathis's 224, Tyson looked in tremen-

dous shape, his torso widening from narrow hips to broad, powerful shoulders. Before the decline brought about by wild living his assets were speed and natural strength. "I sense the speed coming back," he said when interviewed last week. "Every day brings improvement. Even in the short spell I was in with McNeeley I threw too many wild punches. I wasn't happy. Now my timing is better. I'm getting through with the hooks and combinations."

A problem for Tyson is that he is expected to utterly overwhelm a conservative opponent, perhaps scorning the precepts of accuracy, the value of a stiff setting-up jab that D'Amato implanted. "What we've seen from Mike in the gym is tremendously exciting," Bright added. "He's got into a solid pattern of progress and will continue developing. It's usual to think of one fight at a time but that's not how we are looking at things. Mike hasn't

trained specifically for Mathis any more than he will for Bruno. The object is to make himself the complete heavyweight, able to batter out anyone he comes up against."

Mathis has responded predictably to the customary questions. He considers himself to be in excellent shape and to be in Tyson's measure. "Mike doesn't scare me and you may get a surprise," he said.

Sounded as though he was whistling past a graveyard.

Show of hands: Don King with Mike Tyson (right) and Buster Mathis Jnr after yesterday's weigh-in

Photograph: Steven Faulk/Reuters



WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE

TODAY

Football

Matches still on pools corpora

3.0 unless stated

GM VAUGHN CONFERENCE

Athlone v Telford

Bromsgrove v Wellington

Malvern v Gloucester

Hednesford v Kidderminster

Kettering v Farnborough

Macclesfield v Gateshead

Morecambe v Stalybridge

Northwich v Stevenage

Southport v Dagenham

SPALDING CHALLENGE CUP

Strength v Wrexham

FA CARLING PREMIER LEAGUE

First Division

1. Barnsley v Chester

1. Grimsby v Southend

1. Huddersfield v West Brom

1. Ipswich v Shrewsbury

1. Sheffield Wed v Latics

1. West Ham v Southampton

2. Wimbleton v Totton

FA CUP

1. Bradford v Wrexham

1. Doncaster v Barnsley

1. Grimsby v Stevenage

1. Ipswich v Shrewsbury

1. Luton v Chesterfield

1. Macclesfield v Gateshead

1. Morecambe v Stalybridge

1. Northwich v Stevenage

1. Shrewsbury v Wrexham

1. Southport v Walsall

1. Stevenage v Leyton Orient

1. Wrexham v Walsall

sport

McColgan's long run from factory to fame

Geoffrey Beattie finds that Scotland's steely competitor is fired by a warmth of emotion and a debt to her first coach as she prepares for the challenge of next summer's Olympic marathon

In the summer of 1991 Liz McColgan gave what Breandan Foster described as "the greatest performance by a male or female British athlete in the history of long distance running" in winning the 10,000 metres World Championship in Tokyo. This was less than a year after the birth of her daughter, Eilish. In fact, 11 days after she gave birth, McColgan was out on a three-mile training run.

In 1991 McColgan also won the New York Marathon in 2 hr 27 min, the fastest female debut at the distance. She was also voted the BBC Sports Personality of the Year. Not bad for the girl from the council estate in Dundee. Not bad for the girl who started her working life aged 16 in a jute factory, clocking on at 5.30am on those cold Scottish mornings.

These days she lives in a 14-room mansion outside Carnoustie, whose grounds include a gatehouse now occupied by her parents. Her single-mindedness has taken her a long way. A long way up, but as we all know it's even tougher staying there. In 1992 at the Barcelona Olympics, in the 10,000 metres final McColgan trailed in fifth place. Three weeks after the Games, she was diagnosed as suffering from anaemia; this was followed a series of operations on her knees and toes. But the recuperation is finally over, and she has set her sights on the Olympics in Atlanta next year, running in the race she has always felt was her natural distance—the marathon.

On a bright sunny winter morning in Carnoustie, I started off by asking her how long is her distance running?

"It really depends on the individual. I don't find it lonely at all because I quite like being on my own and when I'm running lots of things go through my head. But I suppose when you think about training—especially for the marathon which is up there three hours a day on the road—I suppose other people would visualise it as being lonely."

So what kind of things does she think about when she's out there on the road for three hours at a stretch?

"Well running is a funny old game. If you've got problems whatsoever in your life at all, I think the best solution is to get out and run because it gives you

a clear head and you can really think all your problems through. When I'm running I think a lot about how my body's feeling. I could be running along and have a little tightness in my leg or whatever and I talk to myself to try and release that tension. I think about the pace of my run. I have certain marks on the course that I do because everything is measured for me. I never just go out and run. I run on certain loops that I know the exact distances of, so I look at the time that I'm running and the pace that I'm running and I just thoroughly enjoy the whole atmosphere that I'm in."

My image of Liz McColgan is always of this lonely front running figure, this thin figure with the hair up running into the wind, this lonely figure who seems to want to be on her own. How accurate was this picture I had of her?

"It's not what I do today at all. I've not front run races for a long time. I only ran at the front because I would never take it easy on myself. I just went out and I ran as hard as I could and nobody else could run with me. It's a different situation now. There's a lot more competition today, a lot more girls run a lot more faster and so now I can just sit in and try different tactics."

How did she get into running in the first place?

"When started running there really wasn't anyone in the Dundee area that was running well. We didn't have Olympic champions or anything like that. I think there was one girl who went to the Commonwealth Games but this was followed a series of operations on her knees and toes. But the recuperation is finally over, and she has set her sights on the Olympics in Atlanta next year, running in the race she has always felt was her natural distance—the marathon.

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McColgan has run every day since she was 11. She says: 'If I stopped I just wouldn't know what to do with myself'

Bennett, my first coach, at the club. He had us training Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. He was well ahead of his time. He never pushed us. We used to think it was all games he had us doing. We used to do leaping and bounding and bunny jumps, as he called them. It was actually building up our leg muscles without us actually realising what we were doing. One of my favourite sessions was zig-zagging up these hills. Now I'm older and wiser, I realise exactly what he was up to. He was just building up muscles because we were still growing. When I was 15 he told me that the Olympic gold was in my grasp and that I would be doing the 10,000 metres. At that time there was no distance race for women like that and I just couldn't grasp what he was getting at. It was unbelievable for him to say that to a 15-year-old!

McColgan's relationship with her first coach was obviously extremely close. How did this affect her relationship with her parents?

"Harry was like a second dad. If my mum and dad told me to do something I'd just say 'no I'm not doing it'. If Harry told me, it was done right away. No questions asked. I was always coming up against a brick wall with respect to my running. Everyone

else just didn't understand. 'Are you still doing that running thing?' was what my friends used to say to me. 'Get a real job. You'll never make a living out of running.' When I was 16 I left school and was put on a YTS scheme. They put me in a jute factory. I was stuck in this factory and with me being a runner it was really unhealthy because it was very dirty. I was breathing in all this dust and dirt from the fabric. It wasn't the greatest job for me. That was when I got the opportunity to go America. I'd never travelled, ever been on my own, never been away from my family. The problem at the time was that we didn't have the money. So Harry personally gave me the money. Then an uncle made up the rest of the money and that was it. I was away. Within a week I was gone. I went to Idaho but I was really sad because it was the last time I ever saw Harry because he died when I was out there. He died when he was out running. I could see that this steely runner still gets very emotional, when she thinks of her mentor who gave her the one big chance to escape from the jute factory with the air thick from the dust. So what kind of effect did his death have on her? Since her running was so tied up with this one individual, did her

guilt about missing even one day's training was obviously tied up with her own bodily integrity?

"It didn't really affect my attitude to running. When I had Harry, she was unplanned and it was quite a shock but I really wasn't prepared to have a child that year and so my running was very much foremost in my mind. So I trained all through my pregnancy. I was three and half months pregnant before I knew that I was pregnant and I was training at 100 miles a week. I trained right up until I had her. I think it was about the week before I had her. I was out for a run and I took a really sore stomach and I said 'Well, that's nature telling you stop running.' So I stopped running then. But I just love running. I think if I'd stopped I just wouldn't know what to do with myself."

I wanted to know if she felt guilty if she ever missed going out for a run.

"It does, yes definitely. It just interrupts my whole routine. If I don't run, then the next day I feel about 20 stone heavier. It's just psychological, I feel so unfit if I miss one day running. You've got to remember, I've run every day since I was 11 years old."

The guilt about missing even one day's training was obviously tied up with her own bodily integrity?

"I think that most women athletes think that they should be lighter, and I'm exactly the same. Even when I'm at my lightest, I always think, 'Oh, I should be another few pounds lighter.' It's not a great way to be but I think it's good for me because it makes me very aware that I've got to be good on my diet and I've got to get the best out of my body. A couple of days before a marathon you've got to put carbohydrates into your body. I always put weight on because of it and I hate it. The two days prior to the marathon is when I'm at my worst. I just absolutely hate it."

I asked her whether she ever looked at herself running on television and thought that she looked fat.

"All the time. I think I look fat compared with all athletes. If you look at any report from the London marathon last year, it was all 'Liz has got a weight problem'. It really does bother me because if you're going into a race, you're going to perform well and somebody turns around and says 'You're fat.' I'm not fat, I know that I'm not fat. If I look at any Joe Bloggs walking down the street, I know that I'm not fat compared to them. But in terms of the skin and bone athlete, the distance runners, I'm not in that mould. When I talk to youngsters I will say, 'You don't have to be skin and bones to compete.' It's a major problem, it really is."

Top athletes obviously spend a lot of time thinking about their bodies, monitoring every slight ache and pain. I asked her whether she thought that athletes could become almost hypochondriacs about slight twinges in their body.

"Definitely yes—with some athletes the slightest thing and they're limping off... I'm quite tough on myself. When I was 16 I broke a kneecap and I ran a race with a broken kneecap. I've run through a lot of problems which, medically, I probably shouldn't have... I've got quite a high pain tolerance. I've never dropped out of a race yet in my life and I never will."

Finally, how she would know when her time had come to stop competitive running?

"I'll know. I'm not one of these athletes who could line up, finish 23rd and be happy with it. I couldn't drop out of a race. I've got standards. I'll quit when I'm at the top."

Geoffrey Beattie is professor of psychology at Manchester University. His series of interviews with leading sports personalities, *Head to Head*, continues with Liz McColgan on Radio 5 Live tomorrow at 8.05pm

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

I now believe in Father Christmas, I really do. I owe him a monster Christmas present. Eric Hall, football agent, after the European Union's highest court ruled that the game's current transfer system and quotas on foreign players are illegal.

Poor John (Daly) he can't even get drunk tonight to forget it. Sam Torrance

commiserates with the reformed alcoholic who shot a first-round 80 in the Johnnie Walker tournament.

It was nice to see them sitting together—I don't know whether they were holding hands or not. Glenn Hoddle, the Chelsea manager, on chairman Ken Bates and director Matthew Harding who are trying to patch up their feud.

Wes Hall is one of the most respected Caribbean politicians and the way Lara spoke to him left me in shock. Richie Richardson, the West Indies captain, on his absentee batsman.

I know what people say, but I don't feel too tense out there—that's the funny thing. Mark Ramprakash, England batsman who continues to fail in Tests.

Fantasy and reality meet at the 19th

Tim Glover finds that the best golf tomes reveal not only who won the ultimate Ryder Cup but also who is the best qualified as the worst courtesy car driver

With the choice of Jacklin as captain until, that is, he published Europe's chances in a bitter bust-up, to the classic stage of St Andrews where he reports on an epic match between Europe, captained by Tony Jacklin, and the United States, led by Walter Hagen. Joining the contemporary masters in the European team are Henry Cotton, Christy O'Connor and Eric Brown. The Americans have Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead, Lee Trevino, Tom Watson, Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan.

In a flight of fantasy Derek Lawrence has taken the argument out of the 19th and on to the classic stage of St Andrews where he reports on an epic match between Europe, captained by Tony Jacklin, and the United States, led by Walter Hagen. Joining the contemporary masters in the European team are Henry Cotton, Christy O'Connor and Eric Brown. The Americans have Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead, Lee Trevino, Tom Watson, Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan.

The bookmakers would have had the US 2-9 favourites but Lawrence makes it a close run thing, the match being decided in the final singles between Faldo and Hogan. The major problem with this concept is that the real matches have been so close and so exciting in recent years it is hard to upstage them even in a dream world.

There is also the danger of being overtaken by events. Nobody would have argued

an example of how absorbing the real article is comes in John Feinstein's celebrated book *A Good Walk Spoiled* (Little, Brown, £17.99). In the 1993 Ryder Cup at The Belfry, where Davis Love III won a crucial singles against Costantino Rocca, Love is Feinstein's Boswell and no stomach is left unchanged.

Love's labours, though, is only a chapter in a penetrating insight into life on the US tour upstairs and downstairs. What Feinstein did to college basket ball in his first book, *A Season on the Brink*, he has done to professional golf and his ability to dramatise the mundane makes it read more like a novel. In fact,

but there are enough heavyweights out there to make it an interesting point of conversation at the 19th. Whereas Feinstein is your man in the locker room with a cigar and a notebook, a dazed and confused quote and a naïve belief that a pro golfer endures a brutal existence, Dan Jenkins is your man at the bar with a bloody mary and a bloody mind.

Follow the American tour and you can follow a bunch of visor-clad clowns who look alike,

talk alike, think alike and play alike. In *Fairways and Green—A Timeless Anthology of Golf Stories* (Colling Willow, £9.99) Jenkins knows the difference between Mr Nice Guy and Mr Pain in the Belfry and the latter is all too identifiable in the creation of Bobby Joe Groves, the first player on tour to leave 12 courtesy cars in ditches.

Lauren St. John's *Out of Bounds* (Partridge Press, £16.99) is the European tour's answer to *A Good Walk Spoiled*, which comes from a dog-eared quote by Mark Twain. The only thing wrong with the book is that everybody in it would like it.

Feinstein is described as 'America's No 1 sportswriter'.

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INTERNATIONAL RUGBY: Impoverished Western Samoa ready to prove their worth as money talk disrupts home team's preparation

Time for England to show vision

STEVE BALE

As representing your country used to be honour enough in itself to a rugby man, there has been something mildly unsavoury about the incessant monetary talk that has distracted England during their preparation for this afternoon's match against Western Samoa.

Given that this is one of those games where winning in style is as imperative as simply winning, the prolonged debate about whether professional contracts on offer from the Rugby Football Union should be accepted has not only been tiresome but has left the players even easier targets for the cynics among us.

Should things go awry in Twickenham's first floodlit international, they now have a salary as well as their performance for which to be blamed. Or at least most of them do, the vast majority having followed the lead of their captain, Will Carling, by signing on the RFU's dotted line.

So much for Ross Turnbull's alternative plans for a rugby circus in which England's finest did not wish to be the clowns. (Turnbull, incidentally, is back in Sydney). For the real thing, look no further than the 78,000 megalow in south-west London, even if the visitors are down the pecking-order compared with All Blacks, Springboks and Wallabies.

At the same time, this game, with its prologue of England's contractual agonisms, neatly highlights the dichotomy of international rugby. Members of Carling's team are being paid well enough, in addition to their other sources of income, to withstand external blandishments. You could say something similar about their counterparts in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

But the impoverished Samoans, having effectively been abandoned by their nearest neighbours, exist only on the goodwill of hand-outs and even though their situation has improved thanks to the negotiating skill of their coach, Bryan Williams, their abundant talent makes them uniquely open to offers.

Half-a-dozen took themselves off to rugby league after this

year's World Cup and equally worrying is the continuing threat even now that Williams has acquired sponsorship from a New Zealand bank which is giving his players an indeterminate income. It would probably be a fortune to most islanders but is modest by comparison with England let alone the big southern-hemisphere unions.

This disparity helps give today's match its overwhelming significance to the Samoans. "It is the biggest game in Western Samoan history," Williams said, bigger still than two World Cup quarter-finals.

You could not quite say the same about England, even if the intention is that it will mark a great leap forward towards the mobile/fluid rugby which has been a matter of theory but not practice ever since Jack Rowell became manager last year. "Dynamic" used to be a buzz-word; now it is just another tired cliché.

As was England's rugby against South Africa four weeks ago. Thus the changes in personnel — notably at half-back with the introduction of the Northampton pairing of Paul Grayson and Matthew Dawson — may well prove less important than another imponderable: whether England collectively have an ounce of tactical appreciation.

Running rugby is not the same as running round like headless chickens. Nor, some forwards may care to remember, does it entail an incessant search for contact with an opponent when carrying the ball.

This relies on other imponderables such as peripheral vision and, as it happens, this is one area in which the players know they score heavily because part of their build-up has involved sportscam screening at their hotel on Richmond Hill from which the view of Twickenham's soaring new stands is a permanent reminder of what lies ahead.

Having yesterday collated the results of Thursday's testing, the testers pronounced that England's rugby players had better hand-eye co-ordination than any of the British Olympic athletes tested under the same system earlier in the year. This means running rugby should be second nature, but we wait to be convinced.

ENGLAND v WESTERN SAMOA

	at Twickenham	at Samoa
M. Cox	Wales, 15; R. P. Lewis	Wales
D. Hoppy	Wales, 24; S. Lewis	Manu
W. Carling	Harlequins, 12; T. Young	16 Army
J. Gibson	Bath, 12; G. Edwards	16 Army
R. Underwood	Leicester, 11; A. Tello	Petone
P. Grayson	Northampton, 10; D. Kellie	Ponsonby
M. Dawson	Northampton, 9; J. Flannery	Wellington
G. Rowntree	Leicester, 1; M. Milne	Otago University
M. Regan	Bristol, 2; T. Lalaivao	Wellington
J. Leonard	Harlequins, 3; P. Faletau	Manuka
M. Johnson	Leicester, 4; P. Lovell	Apa
M. Bayfield	Northampton, 5; L. Falakilau	Manu
T. Rodber	Northampton, 6; S. Kalata	Ponsonby
B. Clarke	Bath, 8; P. Lard	Manu, capt
L. Dallaglio	Wasps, 9; S. Veltinde	Manu

Replacements: 1. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 2. P. Jones (Harlequins), 3. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 4. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 5. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 6. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 7. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 8. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 9. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 10. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 11. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 12. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 13. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 14. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 15. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 16. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 17. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 18. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 19. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 20. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 21. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 22. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 23. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 24. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 25. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 26. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 27. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 28. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 29. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 30. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 31. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 32. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 33. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 34. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 35. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 36. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 37. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 38. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 39. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 40. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 41. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 42. J. Cudlipp (Bath), 43. J. 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sport

FOOTBALL: The pen may master the sword but the boot is a different matter, as Glenn Moore found when he trained with Liverpool

Meeting of feet between a hack and a hard man

As Neil Ruddock moved in I frantically tried to recall if I had ever written something foolish like: "Ruddock played like a carthorse". Nothing came to mind, but what if "Razor" confused me with someone who had?

Fortunately, Liverpool's bruising centre-half had another journalist in his sights, the *News of the World* man who had followed him around for three weeks during his marital problems. Now, somewhat boldly, the stalker had the gall to turn up at Melwood to train with his prey.

As Robbie Fowler rasped in shots of ever greater velocity the unfortunate journalist – who had volunteered for a session in goal after Joe Corrigan got fed up – began to lose enthusiasm for his task. The sound of Ruddock bawling "break his fingers so he won't be able to write" did not help.

We were two of a cluster of hacks who had been invited to see how one of England's finest teams honed its stars. The session had been set up, like most football PR stunts, by a sponsor, in this case *Advertiser* who were showing off the latest version of their Predator boot.

The afternoon began with a greeting from Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, along the lines of "we've been dying to take the Mick out of you". Then Sammy Lee took the warm-up. As he led us around the training ground at a brisk jog one staff member shouted out "the physio's room is second on the right". A hack gasped something like "I thought Liverpool did all their training with a ball".

Fortunately, they do. Juventus or Wimbledon, where players face a rigorous daily work-out, would have been considerably more taxing. This was simply to warm up muscles

that are more used to pushing the pedals of a car than kicking a football.

"Most of what we do has been the same since I have been here," said Evans, who has spent more than two decades at the club. "One thing that has changed is the emphasis on warming-down as well as warming-up. In the last five or six years we have done much more of that than we used to."

Liverpool, like many clubs, also look at diet and other aspects of players' health. "We are always looking to learn," Evans said. "You have to listen to the scientists. There is a place for them in the game, as long as it is alongside the football and does not take over."

'Most of what we do has been the same since I have been here'

Evans admits that can be a problem but it is more a question of circumstance. "When things are going well it is not a problem but, when they are not, you are cramped for time. I would like to have done some work this week but we have had five players away with England and Ireland. At times the games take over from the coaching."

This was one of the main themes of the recent get-together between Terry Venables and the managers of clubs who had figured in Europe. Howard Wilkinson, the manager of Leeds, said there were so many games "English clubs were becoming blackboard teams". With time limited points were made on the blackboard rather than the training ground.

One reason for this is the relatively short time English teams devote to training. A survey by *World Soccer* compared Blackburn's regime with those of Juventus, Real Madrid, Dortmund, Nantes, and Ajax. A common theme was the amount of extra training by the foreign sides.

This was partly due to fewer games but not entirely. Dortmund, who had played as many games as Blackburn to the end of November (24), train twice a day when there is no midweek

training, in our group, showed a noticeably more refined touch.

Liverpool's training is based, as it has been since the days of Bill Shankley, on small-sided

Having stretched rusty hamstrings dangerously close to snapping, the Press, not a body of men noted for their devotion to good dietary practices, had finally been given a ball to play with. However, dribbling through narrow plastic cones with Liverpool's finest watching on is not an easy exercise. As England's most successful team in Europe this season (wins in Norway and France), the Press corps had been in cocky mood. This quickly dissipated as we attempted to juggle the ball between us.

Ruddock, in our group, showed a noticeably more refined touch. Liverpool's training is based, as it has been since the days of Bill Shankley, on small-sided

game and often on the day of a game when there is. Ajax have a similar programme. The Ajax players, who had been up to 3am celebrating the Netherlands' win over Ireland on Wednesday night, were training in Amsterdam on Thursday afternoon.

But, Evans noted, there is another factor, the climate, which makes training easier for Juventus than Liverpool. "When it is cold it does not do any good having players standing around outside while you explain things. We have had to do a bit more on specifics recently, working on different options for playing the ball up to the front.

But we have always been a passing team and I see no reason to change that. Sometimes you can change too much."

Liverpool's recent run is the first time things have gone wrong under Evans and it has clearly caused him deep thought. The signing of Stan Collymore has caused problems, both with his outspoken interviews and Liverpool's difficulty in assimilating him into the team. Collymore has suggested Liverpool bought him without knowing what to do with him, but Evans said: "There has to be some give and take. Teams do not defend against us the way

they do against Forest, they do not leave the same space behind them. Stan is quite capable of joining in the short stuff."

"We have had our worst run for years but that does not mean the style is wrong. Confidence plays a massive part. Expectation is high. It always is at Liverpool but, after last year, with winning the League Cup and doing well in the league, we were expected to be genuine title contenders. I am not saying we are not contenders now, it is a bit early to give anything up, but we have made it difficult for ourselves."

Their slump makes Sunday's match with Manchester United

at Anfield all the more crucial. That opens a taxing Christmas programme, fixtures against Arsenal, Aston Villa and Chelsea follow.

Jamie Redknapp, who has been sorely missed, will still be absent on Sunday with his hamstring injury. But, judging by his midweek session, Fowler, who scored twice at Old Trafford in October, is coming back to form.

After the *News of the World* man had made the mistake of tipping one of his circles past the post, Fowler began shooting with astonishing power in one so languid and slender. He was also the only player to make the ball

appreciably "wobble". Us hacks could only make our Predators curl it. The boots were very comfortable but, like the best golf clubs, you have to be a decent player to bring the best out of them. At £120 a throw they are an expensive Christmas present, and not exactly the cheap teaching aid Craig Johnston originally designed them to be.

With Fowler in their side the left-footers comfortably beat the right-footers in the final shoot-out. That meant 30 pressures for the losing team with Ruddock counting them down. The shoulds still ache, but at least he did not tread on the fingers.

Jittery Newcastle put red rivals on alert

Trevor Haylett looks forward to this weekend's crucial Premiership matches

Taking football's scenic route from Wembley and the Portuguese via Anfield to marvel at the Dutch, it was possible to discover light and warmth in a dark and cold December week. The future may or may not be orange, but it certainly has a golden hue as far as next summer's FA Cup although a Les Ferdinand-inspired Newcastle

will seek revenge with a Goodison victory in October.

If the future, as far as domestic issues are concerned, is not to be black-and-white, then logic would suggest it will once more be red, the Manchester United shade rather than that of tomorrow's opponents Liverpool.

Last season Newcastle United's claim founded at this same pre-festive juncture and the events of a week ago brought new ammunition for those who argue that Kevin Keegan's talented collection at a stamp waiting to happen.

While the Stamford Bridge defeat may only be significant in accentuating the positive – in recent seasons it has sometimes been a prerequisite for would-be champions to give second best to Chelsea – Geordie hearts and minds will be put at ease if tonight's League table continues to show them remaining unchecked at St James' Park.

It is a fair assumption that

Cantona is the nearest English football can place alongside the sophistication of the Dutch and the Portuguese who, 24 hours earlier, demonstrated to a Wembley audience that they, too, have an appreciation of football's finer arts. Dennis Bergkamp is another, but the injury which forced him to leave the Anfield party has cost Arsenal his services – at home to Chelsea – for the third Saturday in a row.

Ron Atkinson returns to Villa Park less than thrilled by the difference of 16 places between his present and past employers.

But at least there was last week's 5-0 victory over the champions to remind Coventry what they are capable of.

The Highfield Road humiliation persuaded Blackburn Rovers to spend again with the £2.8m acquisition of Chris Coleman.

The former Crystal Palace defender will make his debut at home to Middlesbrough should Colin Hendry fail to show his recovery from cracked ribs. Rovers' attack is also riddled with injuries, which means Alan Shearer could have the former Aston Villa player Graham Fenton as a new strike partner.

Having staged Netherlands' clinical destruction of the Republic of Ireland, the Anfield men will hope their own faith in clever passing and movement will gain its rightful reward after a less than impressive run while United look to improve on two successive draws.

The corresponding fixture included the successful return of Eric Cantona after his enforced winter hibernation. In what is sure to be an atmosphere in contrast to the sportsmanship displayed on Wednesday, the Frenchman will need to maintain the discipline that so far has distinguished his post-ban appearances.

England may draw Scotland

Glenn Moore on a European draw with hidden depths

Uefa yesterday decided that, if Boemia could play Croatia and the Czech Republic meet Slovakia, England and Scotland could be permitted to play each other after all.

Since only four teams are seeded, England, Denmark, Spain and Germany, the draw ought to be simple. But then it would be over too quickly – there are 1,500 guests, 600 journalists and an estimated 400 million television viewers to impress. So a complicated three-stage system of balls and bowls has been devised.

It is so cunning that very few at Euro '96 seem able to explain it but it may work something like this. First the 12 unseeded teams will be drawn and placed, one by one, in groups of four to four, so the first, fifth and ninth teams will be in group one, the second, sixth and 10th in group two, and so on.

Then the seeds will be drawn and placed in groups. Whichever group England is in will be redesignated A (Wembley and Villa Park). The other groups will have their letter drawn from yet another bowl. B is Leeds and Newcastle, C is Old Trafford and Anfield, D is Hillsborough and the City Ground.

£23m grant for Hampden Scottish Football

Hampden Park was yesterday handed a £23m Millennium Commission grant towards the £51m redevelopment of Scotland's national stadium.

The ground's traditional south stand is to be demolished and replaced by a 16,000-state-of-the-art stand by 1998. It will raise the capacity to 52,000 and will include a museum, media centre and sports injury clinic. Hampden will then be given five-star Uefa status and so be eligible to stage European finals.

Victory for Celtic today against struggling Falkirk at Parkhead would give Tommy Burns' side their 12th in the league, beating last season's total of 11 wins. Celtic are four points behind Rangers, who do not play until Tuesday, when they meet Motherwell at Fir Park in a televised game.

Walker set for Leicester post

old goalkeeper Paul Evans from Wits University, South Africa, in a deal which could cost the Eland Road club up to £750,000, depending on first team appearances.

Gillingham have reinforced their Third Division promotion push by paying £100,000 for Cambridge's 33-year-old striker Steve Butler, who could make his debut at Bury today.

A cardiologists' convention has cost Ibrox the chance of hosting the European Cup-Winners' Cup final in May. Uefa yesterday awarded the final to the King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels, with Rangers blaming a lack of hotel beds in Glasgow for the 8-5 May showpiece. The European Cup final will be played at Rome's Olympic Stadium on 22 May.

Diego Maradona has threatened to quit Boca Juniors in a dispute over who should be the coach. Maradona, who wants the job himself, said that to be in charge would be a dream appointment. "It's like having Cindy Crawford and Claudia Schiffer naked in front of you," he said.

Eddie Clamp, the former England wing-half who won two League championships and an FA Cup final with Wolves, has died aged 61.

Howard Kendall's first signing for Sheffield United could be Manchester City's Michel Vondt. The Dutch defender, who is available at £300,000, is currently on loan at Oldham.

Leeds have agreed an initial fee of £50,000 for the 21-year-

old Walker will return to football tomorrow after a 13-month exile when he fills the vacancy at Leicester City left by the departure of Mark McGhee.

The 50-year-old former Everton manager has had talks with the Leicester chairman, Martin George, and is due to meet him again tomorrow before watching Leicester play Norwich in his role as a television commentator. An announcement is due to be made after the game.

After a 24-year goalkeeping career, Walker moved into management with Colchester in 1983, spending three years as assistant before taking over at Layer Road in 1986. When he was sacked the following year, Walker became reserve coach at Norwich, where he was promoted to manager in 1992. He resigned in January 1994 to sign a three-and-a-half year contract with Everton.

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INSIDE STORIES

A rosy-faced cherub scrutinising the crib looks up at his father and asks, 'Dad, who's the baby?' Dad looks in vain at his wife. 'It's on the tip of my tongue...'

'Last year Mum gave me a jumper. I get one every year. This year I want a coat. But I won't get it. It costs £200. So if I get a jumper I'll exchange it and pay the difference'

9 Stage actors are fabulously badly paid. Precisely how little they earn is rarely discussed. Embarrassment prevents them talking about it among themselves

13 Many parents may not be looking forward to their grown-up children returning for Christmas – not because they don't like them, but because they are already there

PICTURE STORY ... 2
INTERVIEW ... 3
GARDENING ... 4

SHOPPING 5-7
APTS 8-9
BOOKS 10-12

PROPERTY 13
TRAVEL 14-19
COUNTRY 20

MOTORING 21
MONEY 22-25
GOING OUT 26

PASTIMES / BRIDGE ... 27
SUNDAY'S TV & RADIO ... 27
TODAY'S TV & RADIO ... 28

If your boss has given you Christmas day off...



Pop the cork! Release the Cava! You will find Cava is just made for celebrations, and the more spontaneous the better. For one thing, you can rely on its natural sparkle and 'superb' quality, for another, it's incredible value for money!

CASTELLBLANCH - CONDE DE CAVALT - COVIDES - FREIXENET - ROGER GOULART - SEGURA VIUDAS

Cava is the sparkling wine from Spain that is made by the traditional method.

It comes from a land of rolling hills and valleys near Barcelona, where there's plenty of sunshine and moderate rainfall.

The perfect place for vineyards.

As well as being light, delicate and fragrant, Cava wines have a distinctive smoothness and crisp dryness.

It takes many months of careful handling to develop these qualities.

No wonder Cava's so keen to get in the glass when you open it!



picture story



AND A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU TOO



Pictures by Brian Harris
Story by Jonathan Glancey



THIS WEEKEND WHY NOT...



READ

Some Phoenix Sixties

Be the first on your block to investigate the Phoenix Sixties. You know the miniature books published by Penguin to celebrate their 60th anniversary, the nice marketing idea which turned into a surprise, runaway bestseller and upset the heavyweights? Well, here comes the bandwagon. Phoenix House are bringing out 50 more bite-size book-ettes. They include essays on louche and hedonistic subjects by Catullus and Epicurus, a chapter of *Gulliver's Travels*, stories by Kipling (above), Lawrence and de Maupassant, polemics by Paul Johnson (now there's a nice present for someone), *The Communist Manifesto* (ditto), Pepys's diary entries about the Great Fire of London, and scads of love poetry for the love-object-with-the-limited-attention-span in your life. Theoretically out on 22 December, they're in the shops now, waiting for a nod and a wink. ■ 60p each, or £30 for the whole bonsai library.

WATCH

A Holomovie

This is your chance to take in a Holomovie. Pardon? You've seen holograms, now gasp at the Holomovie, the first hardware-free means of transmission for moving images, designed by Chris Lewin at London's quixotically named holographic studio, "eye see". Thanks to exciting technological developments, it is now possible to record four seconds of continuous film via the magic of digital holography. So what's on this one? Freddie Mercury dancing and singing on Queen's 1986 Magic tour (above). This desirable gadget was commissioned for *Ultimate Queen*, a 20-CD limited edition boxed set of sublime pomp-rock, but you can save a few quid by going to see the original, which has been installed at the Museum of the Moving Image - always worth a trip, with or without young ones - as a historic piece of viewing techno-gear. ■ MOMI, South Bank, London SE1 (0171-928 3535), 10am-6pm daily.

Chances are, if you are old enough to remember newspaper, you've old enough to remember the silent film that made a career of it. That's where Harry Caray's friend and business partner, his son-in-law, and his partner-in-crime, Sweetie (one of the long ears and big squeak), plus long-suffering Sook, not to mention Butch, Kipper and Marjorie (they can all have their backs turned, conspired to make Harry's life hell, much to the amusement of legions of small viewers who first spotted him on a TV talent night in 1952). Harry's son, Matthew, inherited the family business in 1976 and has been looking after our fury friend ever since. All of us anglers can catch up on Sook's career, will be amazed to learn that he is about to boldly go where no bear has gone before. Tom Hanks and Apollo 13, eat your heart out. Read for Bradford. ■ Alhambra Theatre, Bradford (01274 752000) at 11am, 2pm & 5pm.

LISTEN

A Flexilamp

The Flexilamp is one of the smartest and cheapest of modern desk-top lights. It looks as if it might have been designed last year by Philippe Starck (he of the stalkling lemon squeezer and the bushy, sleek interiors of New York's smartest hotels) but, remarkably, it dates from as long ago as 1925. No one remembers the name of the Spanish designer who shaped it, which was a shame, as whoever he or she was deserves thanks and recognition. The Flexilamp is much smaller than a conventional anglepoise, and a little less versatile. Its brushed aluminium shade makes effective and pretty use of a 40W bulb. Because the Flexilamp is £21.95, it is tempting to buy more than one, as they look good wherever you place them, whether as conventional desk lamp or for ambient lighting. ■ From Curves & Curves, 80-82, International Court Road, London W1 (0171-580 5223).

As the last summer day is fading in *Porgy and Bess*, the atmosphere in the water is freezing. We are in the middle of a cold snap, and we are hoping to spend Christmas in the snow down the canals. The last time we did this, we probably won't be staying in the Thames but elsewhere in the country you never can tell. Whatever the weather is, it's time to dig down to your local link and sort out those missing blues. Don't, however, sit still, go to a meet, from *Boho* and make believe. You're you, know who. Let's face it, it was good enough for the likes of Doris Day (if you don't believe me, just the *Walk on By the Light of the Silvery Moon* or watch the *Some Like It Hot* scene with the bluesmen), so don't you think it's high time you tried it as well? ■ Queens Ice Skating Club, Bayswater, London W2 (0171-229 0372). Mon-Sun 7.30-11pm. Adults £5, Children £3 plus charges £2.50. See local press for rinks around the country.

EDITED BY DAVID BENEDICT

Two fortyish blokes - paunches, weighty wristwatches, big jewellery - are checking out the Disney store in the vast Lakeside "regional shopping centre" in Thurrock, Essex. They are evidently brothers doing the Christmas shopping. Big Brother picks up a Tigger (there are dozens of them, whatever Tigger himself might claim).

"Forty-five quid for a Tigger. You have to pay the extra in Lakeside, don't you?"

"So, why do we keep coming here, then?"

Big Brother tosses Tigger back on to a soft mountain of Pinocchios and Pocahontases.

As they walk out, the ever-so-nice Walt Disney "greeter" smiles a smile that would melt Cruella de Ville's heart.

"Thank you for coming. Merry Christmas. Have a nice day."

The brothers waddle off, Tiggerless and uncomprehending, into the infinite aisles of this air-conditioned Xmas Essex pantomime, easing their way past the Café Giardino where a fight has broken out between two young women.

"You just leave him alone, you bitch," screams one as she hurls a bowl of 'n' hot lasagne at the other.

The brothers vanish into the throng that has gathered around the Nativity scene. The baby Jesus is sprawled on a cot surrounded by Mary, Joseph, and the Three Kings; there is a lot of automated head-wagging. Baby Jesus is swaddled in sacking and a horde of copper coins. The Yuletide custom at Lakeside, it appears, is to throw money at Jesus for a hit of seasonal luck. A child is complaining that he hasn't got any money left; his grandmother says, "Well, throw a crisp at him instead." The rosy-faced cherub sends a prawn cocktail-flavoured snack flying towards God the Son. A second cherub scrutinising the crib looks up at his father and asks, "Dad, who's the baby?"

Dad looks hopefully at his wife, but she is wrestling with a second child.

"It's on the tip of my tongue..." he says. (Perhaps he's the same man I saw selling crosses and crucifixes at Whitechapel market. "You can have the plain one," he suggested helpfully, "or the one with the bloke on it.")

In Beatties, a railway modeller's paradise, two parents are arguing. "He wants the black Power Rangers helmet, not the red one."

"He doesn't; he's already got the black one."

"No, he hasn't."

"Yes, he has. When did you last look in the kids' bedroom, then?"

Another couple are demanding a discount at the cash desk. They want a scale-model Porsche 911 and Dodge Viper (£14.99 each).

"I'll give you £25 for the pair, and that's tops," says the man.

"We don't do discount."

"Well, stuff it, then," says Dad. "And a Happy Christmas to you, too."

In Jigsaw World, Malcolm and Joan are considering Granny's present. "Gran's a sinner," says Joan. "She won't appreciate a present, so there's no point getting one. Saves a few quid."

Nobly, Malcolm refuses to play Scrooge. "No, the old girl'll like this," he says, picking up a "35 Years of Coronation Street" 1,000-piece puzzle, a sup at £7.99. "And if Gran can't do it," adds Malcolm thoughtfully, "we can always give it to your aunty for her birthday."

In Globe: The Discovery Store, Glenn reckons Pat should get a "How to put on a condom" T-shirt ("I make sure you have a willy") for her dad's Christmas stocking.

"No," she says dismissively. "I'm getting him a pair of windscreens wiper motors from Jeff at work."

And so the spirit of Christmas only-too-present lives on in the shopping malls of Britain. Today, the birth of baby Jesus brings faith, hope and shopping. And the greatest of these is shopping.

By the Lakeside's Trafalgar Square-high Christmas tree, soaring up from Jack Frost's Magic Kingdom, two elderly ladies are sharing a packet of cheese and tomato sandwiches wrapped in foil.

"I'm fagged out," says the first. "I've had it up to here with Christmas shopping. It's the last time..."

The second swallows a chunk of Cheddar and says: "Just like last year then..."

They burst out laughing. They appear not to notice of two large men walking by cradling 90 quids' worth of plastic Tiggers.

Interview by
Michael Bracewell
Photograph by
Glynn Griffiths

Peter York is the Delta Smith of cultural studies. Under his real name of Peter Wallis, at his management consultancy company SRU, he prepares great banquets of data and research for trend-hungry corporate clients. This, you could say, is the silver-service side of his operation. As Peter York, the former style editor of *Harper's & Queen* and best-selling author of *The Sloane Ranger's Handbook*, *Style Wars* and *Modern Times*, he whisks up clever dishes of *Zeigeist* analysis and pop-culture assessment, pleasing epicurean palates with his deft decodings of urban type and their vanities.

Like Delta Smith, Peter York is a professional with the popular touch; articulating the grand and the complex in a language that we can all understand and try out at home on our friends. And, like Smith, York has a major new book and television series to his name: *Peter York's Eighties* – the *Winter Collection* of the negative equity set.

More than any other British writer, York was responsible for inventing what became known in the early Eighties as "style journalism". As defined in his essays for *Harper's & Queen*, York's new school of journalism was a mock-heroic exercise in understanding society by reading its surface – a brilliant cat's cradle of conceits and counter-conceits in which, seemingly, pretty details were the clues to entire social shifts and witty, tag-lines became anthropological equations. All those "Caroline" and "neurotic boy outsiders" (to use a couple of York's terms) could be held in the aspic of pop structuralism and studied at our leisure, either as aspirational types, or pitiable examples of chronic self-delusion. York – a master of his art – was always extremely careful not to taint the game with moral judgements or political opinions: he left us to work it out for ourselves. Now in his late forties, Peter York appears to have grown into his ambiguously magisterial position.

"I cling to the basic set of tenets laid out in Tom Wolfe's *New Journalism* – to get out there like the great French novelists of the 19th century and study life. I am a Tom Wolfe fan of the first order: when you get inside a literary novel you feel that the author, more often than not, just doesn't know enough about things. They haven't been around enough novelists never go anywhere. Once I discovered true books about real things – books like *How to Run a Company* – I stopped reading novels. I loved the idea of *Money* by Martin Amis because it had such a wonderful title. I assumed that it must be about money, and what money does to people's lives. But then I read the book and it wasn't about money at all! And I thought, 'What a bloody con! This person doesn't understand money; the whole thing is a complete... shower'."

With his gloriously plummy accent (Sebastian Flyte meets Terry Thomas) and his immaculate City suits, Peter York took his essays on style to the TV screen in a series called *Hey Good Looking*, which he appeared to play Mephistopheles to a generation of Fausts who were determined to make a contract with Style. Later on, in a mid-Eighties folly of a television drama entitled *Lygation*, this Mephistophelean role was intensified when York played himself, explaining to Sting (from a High Place not a Kiwi fruit's throw from the Institute of Contemporary Art) the plate tectonics of metropolitan society and the perilous topography of the capital's road to glamour. It was a *Bildungsroman* for Thatcher's first children – a *Pilgrim's Progress* for redundant New Romantics. York, you could say, is a Dickens who has never written a novel and an Andy Warhol who has never picked up a paintbrush; the embodied conclusion of Oscar Wilde's pronouncement that "all art is quite useless". Why bother to make art when real life can be so absorbing? Far better, surely, to make money. And Peter York has made loads of money.

With the instinct for realism that relates him to the novelists of the 19th century, and the penchant for nouveau Bohemia and millionaires that links him to Warhol, York should have done something fairly significant in the arts. The fact that he hasn't, but has taken an artist's psychology and applied it to management consultancy, makes him a fairly easy target for cynics and detractors. But he is sure, not to say proud, of his elusive identity. The fabulist, after all, should not be labelled "in 1987", he says. "I did the South Bank Lecture – 'Punk and Pageant'. I thought that was quite extraordinary. You know, up until then they'd had real intellectuals and then they had me – which was rather curious. I think the year before they'd had George Steiner, what came over them I'll never know. With regards to being an intellectual, that's me out now. Because I find myself starting a lot of books and never finishing them. I used to read a lot of books. Now, I mean, I just get things... For instance, my way of dealing with the entire Brat Pack oeuvres was, as they emerged – Brett [Easton] Ellis, [Tama] Janowitz, Jay [McInerney] – to go out, buy them, put

them in a box and think that I'd deal with the problem. Did I really read them? No, not really. Somebody sent me a copy of *American Psycho* and I thought, 'What's wrong with this person? I don't want to read it; I know it's a disgusting book.' I was deeply shocked. I'm Sir Herbert Gossel about things like that – 'Disgusting book? Well, if it's a disgusting book I won't read it!' What is your attitude, incidentally, to gangsta rap music? What is your feeling on the matter?"

This is a typical Yorkian speech: the slightly bullish tones of a man impersonating a *Daily Telegraph* reader give way to the italicised exclamations of a man impersonating an off-duty enquiry; then, just when you think you've got the measure of the character, a question about the most subversive developments in black street culture comes winging in to catch you off your guard. It is a technique that York has honed in his writing and broadcasting to wed Dandyism to demographics and go away with it.

"I think that most cultural studies people are most likely to want to be some latter-day Dick Hebdige, because he's a standard text on their... things. I am not a standard text on their things, which is rather annoying because you get a lot of money if you're a standard text. There's so many cult studies courses nowadays, you see."

"But I'm certainly not a person who spends their every waking moment soaking themselves in signs and signals of the sort that cult studies people study; and it's partly, I suppose, because some of those signs and signals aren't worth bothering about. You have to be selective about these things. This may sound insulting to some of my cult studies friends, but there's a lot of cult studies people who ignore, shall we say, the wider canvas – because they simply don't know about its existence or they don't know how it operates..."

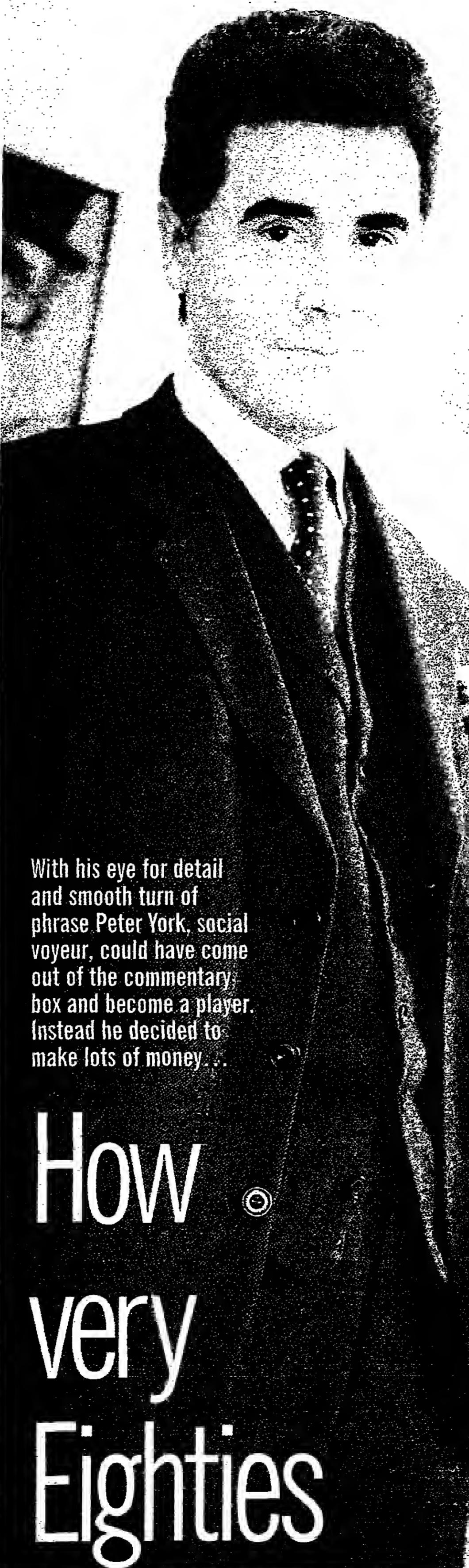
And there's the rub – or one of the rubs, at least. York is the King of the Style Watchers almost despite himself. It's as though he knows the essential uselessness of that particular art unless its soft white bands are dirtied in the name of big business. Which brings us to SRU, the company that York founded in 1973, when his sort of thinking just wasn't being done. After all, it was one thing entertaining the readers of *Harper's & Queen* with what Ezra Pound had defined in 1920 as "the age demanded an image of its accelerated grimace", and quite another being 10 years into your own company and being paid huge fees to tell the age why its grimace was accelerating. No mere poet of the pundits, Peter York could entertain the youngsters while playing big business with the grown-ups – but he was telling them both the same things.

"After doing bad A-levels at a progressive school in Hampstead, I wandered around a bit and sold things in the Portobello Road. Dealership appealed to me but I didn't know how to do it. Then I did a little stint trying as an advertising trainee; this was in the late Sixties and advertising seemed insanely glamorous. It was a completely new art and a rather un-English thing to do, and I thought it was absolutely wonderful."

"But through that, I met a man called Conrad Jameson who was kind enough to employ me. He was really very interesting and he taught me most of what I know. I think I've been thinking about this recently; he was a kind of proto-Peter York. He did strategic research, but his real love – and he got on telly about it – was architecture. He also wrote for the *Sunday Times* on architecture, and he was an altogether inspirational employer. I worked for him from 1969 through to when we founded SRU in 1973, and he taught me lots."

At SRU, the Peter Wallis side of Peter York is applying the serious (grown-up) findings of his spectrographic ability to read the blips and squeaks in the *Zeigeist* to research for companies who want to understand more about their markets. And, to judge from his elegant and well-appointed office, he's clearly very good at it. This is an aspect of his work, one suspects, that has positioned him so well to have a theory about the Eighties. "Most of our work here is concerned with the Big Picture" – What To Do. This makes it sound as though I'm down on the lovely marketing profession, which I'm not. But they're in the business of making things happen, and we're in the business of strategising the things that they make happen. So typical problems will be in the order of: should we be in Europe? If so, in what way? How do we pin together a business made out of separate acquisitions to make it a coherent whole? And so on. Quite a lot of it is based on our bit of fancy language – a concept that we call the 'Human Agenda', which is all to do with understanding the set of relationships that make a company work."

York's professional concept of the Human Agenda could be seen to be the basis of his new television series and book about the Eighties. *Peter York's Eighties*, appearing in a massive phase of national denial of that most complex



With his eye for detail and smooth turn of phrase Peter York, social voyeur, could have come out of the commentary box and become a player. Instead he decided to make lots of money.

How very Eighties

and febrile of decades, is a hugely risky undertaking. After all, we are still looking for someone to blame for the Eighties and, having tried to pin it all on Duran Duran, we might set our sights on Peter York. The series is divided into six alliteratively titled sections: Pioneers, Property, Pushers, Paradise, Plutocrats and Post. York, often filmed in the style of a pop video, gives his theory of the last decade while interviewing a selection of 'Tory intellectuals' who skulk in anonymous rooms like war criminals and former advertising and Soho types who look rather lost – like so many Bryan Ferry's with the batteries taken out.

"In the series, when we look at the profit and loss account of the Eighties, we come to the conclusion that the economic agenda would almost have to have been done by almost any government of any colour that wished to survive. In other words, if the Labour Party had been in office, it would have had to have invented Tony Blair and his agenda. But what they left out of count was the cultural agenda; there was this fascinating combination of a radical economic agenda with an amazingly conservative social agenda. The radical economic agenda worked and the conservative social agenda simply didn't. They were tearing in absolutely opposite directions."

"So to say, on the one hand, that we want 'the market will decide', and on the other 'warm beer and village greens', is completely impossible. And they didn't recognise the impossibility of those things; the poverty of the imagination was that it didn't begin to grapple with the social consequences of the agenda or plan in any way for them. So now, in the Nineties, the basic economic job is done but the social and cultural job is crying out to be done. But don't go away with the idea that this is the *Newsnight Annual*..."

But the series does make fascinating viewing, whether you love or loathe its subject, and it does raise an interesting conundrum of moral and social perception. Also, it is forced to tackle the question of social responsibility in relation to "style journalism" and the somewhat soulless practice of ironic mediation.

"What the series is designed to do is to get to grips with people's complicated feelings about the Eighties. And the more clever and complicated the people I found, the more complicated their feelings. The contrast between people bad-mouthing the Eighties, for whatever reason, and the oral history that said 'this was great', led me to think that somehow this had to be resolved – this is one of those absurd contradictions. People would ring me up at the beginning of the Nineties and say, 'It's the Nineties. Can you perceive a trend?' And my answer was, 'You may say it's the Nineties, but all I can see is a lack of Eighties-ness – a massive set of defaults. And that's what provoked me to want to explore those sets of Eighties' feelings."

In some ways, *Peter York's Eighties* takes his concept of the Human Agenda, as conceived at SRU, and employs it to make a 19th-century novel out of the decade that was, after all, "the best of times and the worst of times". Even the term "Human Agenda", calls up the Flaubertian "Human Condition" and the Balzacian "Human Comedy". And yet there is something not quite right about all of this. There is almost a sense that Peter York is comprised of two performance artists, York and Wallis, who can slip in and out of one another's characters to suggest a third, invisible persona – a Peter X. Peter X can wear either the mask of the sober businessman or the mask of the dandyish style guru: Peter X, whether behind his desk at SRU or in front of the cameras at the BBC, can sub-contract aspects of his persona to an army of researchers and assistants, applying Warhol's Factory technique to the maintenance of his compelling and lucrative identity: Peter X, as Wallis and York, can play the audiences for his two roles off against one another. Peter X, I suspect, is at heart a punk, making cash out of chaos by mixing subversion with comedy.

When I explain this theory to Peter York, he bursts out in a glorious and endearing shout of laughter. "Don't tell anyone," he murmurs. "Subversion-like creativity, is not a word to use in mixed company."

"*Peter York's Eighties*" starts on Saturday 6 Jan, BBC2; published by BBC Books 11 Jan, £12.99

faces of the eighties

Cover photographs (left to right)
First row: Adam Ant, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Arthur Scargill, Bob Geldof, Neil Kinnock, Daley Thompson, David Puttnam
Second row: Dawn French, Princess Diana, Peter York, Eddie Shah, Michael Heseltine, Jennifer Saunders, Ian Botham
Third row: Joan Collins, Jonathan Ross, Gerald Ratner, Jilly Cooper, Lord Hanson, Margaret Thatcher
Fourth row: Lenny Henry, Lynn Franks, Morrissey, Martin Amis, Paul Smith, Sarah Brightman, Harry Enfield
Fifth row: Teresa Gorman, Tina Brown, Peter Stringfellow, Sade, Anita Roddick, Boy George, Maurice Saatchi

There is more to it than holly and ivy

Make your decorations from chilli peppers, pomegranates and walnuts. By Anna Pavord



When, in a rush of blood to the head, we got rid of our twisty willow, *Salix x tortuosa*, I didn't have Christmas in mind. I resented the willow's rate of growth, the way it was taking over the space meant for apples and pears, and the disfiguring disease that affected its summer foliage. Now that I am cruising round the garden in a predatory frame of mind, sizing up what is likely to be useful for decorating the house this Christmas, I miss it. It was always better in winter than in summer, when the bare twisty branches made good shapes against the sky. Silvered, the branches can be stuck in a bucket of sand, and splayed out in a corner of a room to support silver rain, or lights, or very small baubles.

Beech is good for that, too, with its elegant pointed buds, but over the years I have cut all the beech within reach on our old trees. Perhaps I should kidnap a tractable passer-by in the lane outside. Instead of, Miss Haversham style, commanding "Play, boy, play" I could shout "Climb, boy, climb" and be rewarded with a cascade of twiggy branches.

The cruise round the garden is usually followed by a snoop around Paperchase or some equally trendy venue, to pick up a few new ideas for decorations that we can make at home. Most of what happens here by way of decoration is the same every year, because that is the point of Christmas, but now and again I need to remind myself that there is a world beyond ivy.

Red chilli peppers seem to be the craze this Christmas. They are everywhere, wired on to wreaths, woven into garlands, clustered under ribbon ties to make Christmas tree decorations. Signs that the kitchen cupboard was the in-place to raid for ornaments rather than food were visible last year, when dried orange slices at outrageous prices, and restrained sticks of cinnamon tied with red ribbon, began to oust gaudy baubles on Christmas trees. This year the trend has intensified.

Christmas colour, instead of being bright and glittery, red and silver, has been wound down to several notches to a subfusc spectrum of rust, ochre, oxblood and tan, with perhaps a discreet smudge of gilding to go with it. Our shambolic style could never live up to that, but this may be the year of the pomegranate, which is a pleasing shape to use in decorations, rounded, but

not too perfectly so, with the little dry tufted calyx at the top, which is where its flower once was.

If you don't mind wasting the pomegranates, leave them as they are, spray them over lightly with gold paint and before the paint dries, sprinkle a little sugar over them. It gives them a pleasingly frosted look. If you want to use the seeds, cut a hole at the base of the fruit, scoop out the seeds with a teaspoon and pack the centre with tissue to mop up the wet. Stand the fruit in the airing cupboard to dry out before you spray them.

They look good heaped in a bowl with clementines and the dark green leaves of holly, bay or camellia. Or you can wire them on to a wreath. First find your wreath. Paperchase has beautifully simple ones made from vine trimmings twisted round in a circle, then sprayed with gold. If you haven't pruned your vine yet, now is the moment. It should be done this side of Christmas, before the sap starts to rise.

Twist the stems into the wreath shape before they dry and get brittle, but dry off the wreath before you try to spray it. The advantage of using this kind of base is that it is beautiful enough to show through whatever you put on it. And the vine stems make easy anchoring points for wired-on pomegranates, nuts, sprigs of evergreen, little red apples or whatever else you want to put on them. Fir cones, sprayed lightly and dusted with glitter would look good with the pomegranates.

You can also make wreath bases from chicken wire rolled up to make a sausage and then bent round into a circle. Proper florists stuff theirs with moss. I don't usually bother with any stuffing. You can disguise the wire very quickly by poking in evergreens all the way round the wreath. If you push hard, some of the leaves go through the holes in the chicken wire which anchors the sprigs quite firmly. The good thing about Christmas decorations is that they don't have to last too long.

When the wreath has its green background in place, take some wide wire-edged ribbon and bind it loosely round and round the wreath, crinkling the edges as you go. Wire-edged ribbon is fantastic stuff, because it stays where you put it. When you have worked all the way round the wreath, fix the end of the ribbon on to the beginning - a pin will do - and start filling in



You too can make imaginative wreaths like these at Wild at Heart in west London

Photographs: Peter Macdiarmid

the spaces between the swathes of colour. Use walnuts sprayed silver, baubles, cherubs, stars, whatever takes your fancy. Nuts have to be fixed on with florist's wire. Bend the end of the wire into a little right angle and stick this to the bottom of the nut with some glue.

A wreath such as this also makes a good table centre. Fill the wreath with greenery, as before, using holly, dark green box or ivy and adding a few bunches of variegated leaves, either holly or ivy, to relieve the darkness. The seedpods of

the stinking iris or gladwyn (*Iris foetidissima*) work well in a wreath of this sort. So do the showers of small hips from a rose such as 'Kiftsgate'. Add plenty of glittery stuff.

Put the ring in the centre of the table and arrange gilded pomegranates, if you have made them, in a ring against the inside edge of the wreath. Then you should put some tall candles in the middle, anchored either in their own holders, or stuck with plasticine to a tin plate. It is a wise precaution to pick greenery before you want to use it or the Christmas table will be alive with woodlice and small spiders making determined assaults on the brandy butter.

Candles are your greatest allies at Christmas. That's not just because they look good. In the gentle, diffuse light they cast, nobody will notice that you have not dusted the bookshelves or fully removed the scars of last year's Christmas from the carpet underfoot.

Hologram paper place mats are going to be joining the candles on our Christmas table this year. A sheet of hologram wrapping paper costs about a pound and is enough for two reasonable place mats. Give each setting its own little beacon to set the holograms dancing. Night lights are invaluable as they are enclosed in their own aluminium holders. There is no molten wax to worry about and, because they are so squat, they do not wobble or fall about.

Set a night light on a beer mat covered with silver paper (or a disc of hologram paper if there is enough). Build a small wreath of bits and pieces around each light, using a combination of dark greenery and tinsel, with bunches of fake bolly berries if you cannot get hold of the real thing. The birds have stripped ours already. I do not begrudge them. It is better than ruining their stomachs on supermarket bread.

If you prefer, mass tall candles on round tin trays or plates and use them either side of the wreath centrepiece. Disguise the base with sprigs of ivy tucked in around the bottom of the candles, rings of satsumas round the outside and old baubles tucked into any gaps. At some stage of the meal, probably with the Madeira and raisins, the candles will have burnt low enough to catch the fire alight. If the Madeira is doing its job properly, this will not bother you. And the effect on the hologram paper will be memorable.

More than 200 rhododendrons, including the rare species *R. oreodoxa*, *R. beesiana* and *R. phaeochrysum* have been returned to China in a new conservation initiative pioneered by the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. This is the first time that the RBGE has returned live plants to their country of origin. The rhododendrons have gone to the Hua Xi Subalpine Botanical Garden in Sichuan province to provide the nucleus of a

conservation collection of plants that are under threat in their wild habitats. The rhododendrons will be propagated in Sichuan and some of them can then be used to reinforce wild populations.

The project has been funded in part by the government's Darwin Initiative. The link is particularly appropriate as many of these plants were first brought to the RBGE by plant hunters at the turn of the century. The botanic garden is an important research centre for anyone interested in the flora of China. Taxonomists there are working on a monumental 25-volume flora of the country which should be finished by 2010.

The National Trust is to acquire the 675-acre, Grade I listed Capability Brown landscape park at Croome, near Worcester, from the Sun Alliance and London Assurance Company, which has owned a large part of the estate for the last 15 years. Brown's design for the park with its lakes and river remains almost as he planned it. The park buildings include a splendid temple greenhouse designed by Robert Adam in 1760 and features by James Wyatt.

The National Trust estimates that the total cost of the restoration and preservation of Croome Park will be in the region of £8m. It has already received more than half that sum from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. The restoration is likely to take 10 years.

The poinsettia is top of the pots

By Anna McKane

Top of the pots this Christmas is the poinsettia. Sales of about 5 million, almost all in the space of one month, will put it miles ahead of any challenger.

Potted flowering heathers are not jolly enough, winter cherries and azaleas are not quite the right colours and the elegant cyclamen, sadly, can't take the temperatures we like in our sitting-rooms. But the poinsettia, which comes from the tropics, can stand the heat - even of an extended family get together.

With its flamboyant red bracts and shiny green leaves, it might have been made for Christmas. That hasn't stopped plant breeders from producing creams, pinks and peaches, which some think are smart and trendy, and traditionalists think are pointless.

There are other variations on the original plant, too, with standards appearing in the shops, as well as groups of miniaturised poinsettias in bowls.

Poinsettias are big business. From the growers' point of view, they do well with summer bedding and container plants. When the last of these are sold

from the nurseries in June and July, rooted poinsettia cuttings are bought in by the thousand. Large numbers of the cuttings and finished plants are produced in this country: poinsettia growing is one area of the pot plant business that has not become dominated by the Netherlands.

The plants are grown on until mid- to late November, with the temperatures being lowered gradually towards December to harden them off ready to be transported to the shops. Then the whole crop is sold in less than six weeks. After Christmas, as we throw away our bits of holly and store our decorations, the growers are bringing on mother poinsettia plants from which cuttings will be taken in the late spring.

Well over a hundred varieties

have been bred over the last few years, although buyers are unlikely to find named types when they reach the shops.

As well as slightly different colours, many of the new varieties have been developed to help the professionals with speed of growth, shelf life, and their "breaking habit". This refers to the plant's ability to produce plenty of strong flower-bearing side shoots when the main shoot is pinched out. The yellowish flowers are tiny, it is the surrounding bracts which give the dramatic colour.

One characteristic that the breeders have done away with is the need for long nights. Until recently growers had to provide 14 hours of darkness during the autumn to encourage the plants to produce flower buds. This is why, we used to be told, amateurs should throw out their poinsettias soon after the holly, because they would never get them into flower again. But John Evans, managing

director of H Evans and Sons of Sidcup in Kent, explains that this is no longer true.

Mr Evans's firm produces around 400,000 poinsettias under more than 10 acres of glass, and he says the varieties grown now can be persuaded into flower next year without elaborate arrangements for restricting light. However, the problem for the amateur is size. In its native Mexico and in the West Indies *Euphorbia pulcherrima* grows to 6ft tall and is often found in hedgerows. The plants we buy have usually been treated with a growth retardant so they flower while smaller than they would be in the wild.

Next year the same plant may flower, if it is looked after and fed regularly, but it will have grown to three or four feet high. If you can accommodate the size, it might be worth cutting your Christmas poinsettias back when they have finished flowering and giving them a rest in the garden when the frosts

are over. They should be brought into the house and fed regularly in the late summer.

Avoid overwatering. Mr Evans advises waiting until the compost

is dry, standing the pot up to its top in water for a few minutes, then draining and returning it to its potholder. The plant's real enemy is waterlogging, and if it is watered

in its cache-pot there is a danger it will be left for several days standing in water.

All the poinsettias now in the

shops and garden centres have been grown from this year's cuttings, even the standard ones which are selling for very fashionable prices of around £100. These have been fed lavishly to make them shoot upwards, then pinched out at about a metre high to produce a mophead of colour. The tiny ones, called tots in the trade, have been fed with a growth retardant and grouped in bowls for a pretty effect.

As growers experiment continuously with new strains, we can expect more unusual colours, moving through peaches towards orange.

And breeders are also working on strains which will drape themselves in hanging baskets, so we can expect to see festoons of these soon in Christmas displays in restaurants and shopping malls.



150

All I want for Christmas...

Will it be Pogs or perfume? Cafetière or cultivator? Three families confide their hopes and aspirations, disappointments and frustrations to Sally Williams. Photographs: Keith Dobney and Nicholas Turpin



The Snape family: Nigel, 36, farmer and landowner; Angie, 32; Hugo, 5; Toby, 3; Flora, 10 months. They live in the Alkham Valley, Kent

Nigel
I do all my shopping on Christmas Eve. I only ever buy presents from shops where they wrap them up, and I always make sure the receipt is with it. Angie normally tells me exactly what she wants, and I go and buy it. That works very well. Except one year I was detailed to go and buy a gold bracelet. For £700 all you got was a little strip. So I bought a silver one instead. It made much more of a splash. But that didn't go down at all well and was promptly swapped for the gold one.

I don't think children need many toys. The boys usually get some toy farm machinery. They're expensive, around £22 each, but at least they don't break after 10 minutes or need batteries.

I don't know what I want this year. My parents are giving me wine glasses—I know that as I've already bought them. Last year Angie gave me some golf lessons which was a good present for a man.

Angie
Nigel is incredibly fussy. Last year I bought him golf lessons, but he only used four of them, and a very smart rubbish bin, which he just laughed at. I never get any surprises. I have to tell Nigel exactly what I want, even down to the code. I asked for Rive Gauche scent one year and he bought the deodorant. But if Nigel bought me bubble bath for 90p, I wouldn't care. It's the children that are important.

Hugo
Nigel thinks the boys have too many

toys, but they have hardly any compared with other children. Last year Hugo asked Father Christmas for a rubber and a pencil and he would have been quite happy with that. I've bought Flora a china mug from Peter Jones. I'm taking full advantage of the fact that she's still too young to care.

Toby
I sent a letter to Father Christmas—not the one who comes to my school, but the real one—and asked for one pencil, one sponge, one glove, one sock, one cup, and a hauler and a cultivator.

Hugo
I want a hauler and a cultivator like Hugo.



The Taylors: Annie, 49 (centre); Mishkin, 27 (left), building crafts student; Milly, 25 (second right), environmental researcher; Henry, 22 student (right); Martha, 21 (second left), assistant for fashion buying agency. Annie's husband Jimmy died in 1991. They live in London.

Annie

Last year I bought Milly a stripy cardigan. I wasn't going to get it. Whenever I buy clothes for my children I always get it wrong, but my friend said it was very Milly. She was right, and it was a huge success. In fact, Martha who is very fashion conscious has since "borrowed" it.

Hugo
Jimmy was an amazing present buyer. The idea of cost didn't interest him at all. He would spend hours buying hundreds of books. I keep the tradition going, but don't buy nearly as many. Even Henry, who hates reading, gets a book. I haven't given up trying to wean him off Jilly Cooper.

Henry
Last year a great friend of mine made me a breadboard from a lovely piece of wood and carved my name and the year on it. It was the perfect present. Quite the nicest I've had for years, and yet it cost him nothing beyond his efforts. This year I'd like a folding pruning saw for the garden.

Milly
Mum always claims she'd be happy with a kiss, so she's very easy to buy presents for. Mima and I always buy each other the Red Stone Press Diary, because we're rather sad like that and for the past couple of years we've bought one for Mishkin too. I have no idea if he likes them.

Geoff
Mum would never give us vouchers as that implies no thought. But all clothes are bought with the knowledge that we'll almost certainly buy and change them. The stripy cardy, however, really was very nice.

Geoff
We still have stockings. I'll get masses of make-up, which is obviously meant for Martha because I don't wear any make-up, or Mima will get four pairs of Christmas knickers and the rest of us won't get any.

Geoff
Mum always gives Mima and I matching pyjamas. Martha used to get them too, but she has made it very clear that she's not interested in those sorts of presents.

Geoff
This year, I'd like loads of books. Nothing makes me happier.

Mishkin
I usually buy the girls books, because I like being given books, but I buy them more highbrow ones than I would read. Martha doesn't like reading, so I normally give her a record. Dad always bought masses of books and that's why

I do it. People can always grow into books. Henry is very difficult. Unless you have lots of money it's impossible to make him happy.

The first Red Stone Diary I was given. Drawing by Writers, was great. Last year wasn't quite so good. I've no idea what this year is like. I'm sure I'll soon find out.

This year I'd like a big medical dictionary. I've been quite ill recently and so far I've been told I've got shingles, glandular fever and meningitis. I'd like to find out exactly what is wrong with me.

Henry
Henry is very easy to buy for. She normally goes shopping with me and unlike the others, we always tell each other what our presents are anyway. I have been given some truly awful presents, especially from old people. Embroidered handkerchiefs and nylon socks—that kind of thing, but I'd never say anything, we're all quite tactful.

Last year Mum gave me a Jigsaw jumper which I liked and a pair of Jigsaw jeans which I didn't like and took back.

Other than things for my new flat, I'd like—hut I'm absolutely not going to get—a massive television with Nican digital stereo. It costs about £1,000. Mum would think that was incredibly naff. I think it's naff too, but what the hell.

Martha
If I had the cash to buy all of my family something to wear I would, but I don't. Last year I did all my shopping on Christmas Eve and spent far too much money on not very nice presents. I got Mima some really expensive, rather pointless, body lotion for £5.

Last year Mum gave me a Jigsaw jumper. I knew I was getting a Jigsaw jumper, because I get one every year. I took it back. There was nothing wrong with it. I just didn't want another Jigsaw jumper.

A few years ago I would have gone with Mum to make sure she chose the right thing, but now it doesn't really matter. She can get me what she likes. This year I'd like a cream Jigsaw knee-length coat. But I won't get it. It costs £200. But if I get a Jigsaw jumper, I could exchange it and pay the difference. So, I hope I get a Jigsaw jumper after all.



The Hills: Nick, 59, journalist; Liz, 40, residential letting agent; Ashley 11; Megan 9; Geoff Richards, 69, and Joan 66, are Liz's parents. They all live near Ashford, Kent.

Nick
Before Lizzie gave me instructions I always got it wrong. I have had some success in buying her scarves, but only because they all come from Next, one of her favourite shops. Last year Lizzie gave me a watch but it never worked. Joan gave me a green-house heater which I use in my office and is brilliant. I'd like books and clothes, but what would make me really happy would be to have some Christmas tree lights that work.

Liz
I always buy Nick clothes. Nothing matches if he chooses for himself. I've already given him one present. It's a framed portrait photograph of me. The girls are easy to buy for. I spend much more on them than on Nick or my parents. This year I've asked Nick for boots, a cafetière and leather gloves. I never like to know if he's actually gone out and bought any of them. I still like some element of surprise.

Ashley
Last year Granny and Grampa bought me and Megan a Walkman and some pyjamas. They always buy us the same thing

to stop us fighting. Once, Megan was given a Game Boy. I really wanted one. So Mum had to buy me one, but she got the wrong one and had to buy another one. I'd like a big teddy bear and a Mr Frosty lolly maker, but Mum says that's for four-year-olds. So I'd like a Spirograph Studio instead.

Megan
Last year I got the Crocodile Dentist game. And this year I'd like a Pog Maker. I've got about 20 Pogs already, but Katie Deneray from school has got about 90.

Geoff
Last year Lizzie gave me a cordless drill. I'm no good at DIY, but I did manage to put up a rack. The binoculars my wife gave me never worked very well. This year I'd like the latest Dick Francis.

Joan
Geoff bought me an idiot-proof camera last year, which was a surprise. Geoff is good on surprises. Last year I had a vacuum cleaner. I was thrilled with it—I like practical presents. Perhaps I'll get a washing machine this year.



Leopard prints bring out the cavewoman in all of us

the thing about...

Leopard print

I nearly fainted in Beauchamp Place the other night. One moment we were walking along, perfectly normally, and the next moment I glanced into the window of the Caroline Charles shop and the blood rushed to my head. There, in the plain display which belies great expense, was the ultimate object of desire: stiletto-heeled ankle boots with panels of leopard-skin — £195 worth. Just the thing for a girl's stockings this Christmas.

The thing about these gorgous creations is that they combine two objects of fantasy: a hoary old favourite and

a very Nineties one. A pair of drop-dead sexy shoes gets many people's blood pumping, and the wonderful release of being able to wear animal pelts again without fear of paint-bombs is heady stuff.

The streets are currently littered with animal skins: you can hardly move for acrylic zebra, viscose tigers, woolmix astrakhan, man-made and the ubiquitous leopard print. Hennes does a lovely velvetine photoprinted jersey for £14.99. There isn't a chain store worth its salt that doesn't carry a line in death-free bucket bags. And in several of the Emporia of May-

fair and Knightsbridge you can even buy a sofa which yearns for the savannah.

The explosion of leopard-skin accessories has put a new complexion on the fur debate. Despite everything—despite hectoring, despite spoilt pop-stars making bonfires of coats; despite Naomi Campbell — we still want to dress in animal skins. Fur is it.

I think the reasons run deep. I have to admit to having owned two real fur coats in my life. One set of beaver lambs died for the pleasure of my grandmother, who probably wasn't, in the Fifties, thinking too hard about ani-

mal welfare. The other was a mink I bought in Oxfam for a fiver. Please don't send me firebombs, but I really loved those coats. They were warm, they were gorgeous to touch and they brought a bit of

glamour to studenthood. These are some of the reasons why women have flung themselves on the new alternatives to fur. First, the anti-fur lobby have got it wrong if they really think that people particularly want to wear big cuts. What they want is to be big cats. In a world of awkwardness and rule-following, big cats hold out the promise of sleekness, grace, playfulness and, well, the feline qualities. Ask most people what animal they would most like to be, and they would come up with some form of cat. And then again, they feel lovely. The next best thing to stroking a cat is stroking a fake cat-fur coat. Also, when all's said and done, they do represent a fantasy. Most women want to pretend, just for a bit, that they're rich bitches as they head from

thankless job to Lean Cuisine. And there's something even deeper than all that: something so primitive that many urban societies don't want to look it squarely in the face. We're still cave people underneath. Women divide into two types on this. Some want to prove that their man is brave enough and a good enough provider to even bring a sabre-toothed tiger home for her. Or a at least a mill-loomed sabre-toothed tiger. And the rest of us? Well, we just want to look as though we can kill one ourselves.

Serena Mackesy

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shopping

You think snowstorm paperweights are kitsch? Try one ringed in baby-pink marabou

By Monique Roffey

Stuck for a present to buy for that apocryphal person who has everything? Just the thing, and hipper than the Mike Flowers' Pop cover song of Oasis's "Wonderwall", is the naughtiest of naff manne-piece icons - the snowstorm paperweight.

"They're selling like hotcakes," says Stuart Glover, assistant manager in Harrods' Christmas decorations department. "We sold 150 last week alone - kitsch is in."

But snowstorms have been around for years, so why the sudden fad? "They're a hit different these days," says Ashley Clayton, a shop assistant at Objects in York which sells a wide selection of snowstorms. "The ones we sell are more glitzy and kitsch. They've got gold glitter and sparkles instead of snow and have camp figures inside like cherubs, moons and dragons." Some are even ringed in baby pink fake marabou. "They used to be thought of as tacky souvenirs from Scarborough, but now they've been revamped - though they still retain that element of naughtiness that people liked in them in the first place."

Allec Strauss, who runs Christmas Angels, an all-year-round Christmas shop, also in York, agrees. "We've also experienced a fad for them recently. They seem to be selling all year round, not just at Christmas. They represent a bit of nostalgia - they're a childhood thing." His snowstorms are also of a high quality. "Ours are made from glass with ceramic or resin bases. They've gone up in quality and come down in price." Having said that, his most lavish is a gold plated musical snowstorm of a nativity scene retailing at £45.

Karl Cook sells exclusively made kitsch camp and beautiful snowstorms filled with pure mineral water. "Oh, they're very much this year's thing," he says. "We've sold a huge amount. It's funny, because we were surprised at first how popular they were, but then we even saw the classic plastic, tacky versions being snapped up elsewhere."

So which snowstorms are the most sought after? "The moving ones and the musical ones were the first to go," says Stuart Glover at Harrods. "It's the novelty factor that people want. We also have one of a teddy holding a Har-



Moving snowstorms are the most popular, then musical ones

rods globe, which tourists love."

"At the moment, our traditional, Christmas ones are selling best," says Allen Strauss. He warns that the moving versions can be troublesome. "We used to get moving ones which had a battery and would blow the snow around inside the glass dome all the time, but they used to break or get leakage." While everyone, from kids to grannies, is buying them, Strauss sees the occasional snowstorm fanatic who collects them and is looking for a specific item. "We had a man in the other day looking for a unicorn, but we didn't have one."

And they can't be made to order - in fact, they aren't made in this country at all anymore. Karl Cook imports his quality models from Germany, but most snowstorms available here are made in Taiwan or China. Prices vary according to size and complexity, anything from £8 upwards to £45.

"I've been collecting them for years," said one collector at Harrods' decorations department. "I'm glad to hear they're fashionable now, because people have always joked about my collection. I knew one day people would see them as I do - rather beautiful."

Christmas Angels, 47 Low Petergate, York (01904 642454). Harrods Christmas department, Knightsbridge, London SW1 (0171-730 1234). Objects, 21 Castlegate, Coppergate Centre, York (01904 647373). For stockists of Karl Cook's snowstorms, call Environment on 01977 685101

Keepers of the flame

For 155 years Price's has made candles in its Victorian factory on the Thames. But now its future is in doubt. By Monique Roffey

Vats of molten candle wax stand near the walls like dark wells. In one corner long tubes of creamy white wax get chopped into smaller church candles, and then boxed by expert hands. Slabs of coloured wax, like great candy ingots, are piled up in columns. Christmas is a busy time of year at Price's Patent Candle Company, a Victorian factory on the banks of the Thames at Battersea.

"It certainly is," says Berry D'Arcy, the company's marketing assistant. "We sold £8,000 worth of candles last Saturday alone." But while the last decade has seen a boom in the candle industry (since 1987 its worth has tripled to an estimated £75m), at one time the industry was almost completely extinguished. "Around the turn of the century, when gas was being used and electricity had just been invented, candles went out of use completely," she explains. "Until then, they'd been the only source of artificial light and had been used for centuries - the rich using beeswax, and the poor using the smaller and smokier tallow candles made from animal fat. It's only recently that candles have enjoyed a comeback and have been thought of as gifts."

Price's Patent Candle Company was established in 1830 by Benjamin Lancaster and William Wilson. Both were commodity brokers dealing in Russian tallow, who managed to acquire the oil patent for making candles with palm oil. Going into "trade" at the time was rather looked down upon, so to hide their involvement with the business, they gave the company the name of a Miss R Price, Benjamin Lancaster's maid-servant. They took over the site in Battersea and a 1,000-acre coconut plantation in Ceylon. When the factory first opened, barges carrying the palm oil from Ceylon would pull up at low tide right outside the factory walls, and unload their cargo. In the 1920s the barges were swapped for road tankers, and the palm oil for petrol oil.

Today the factory, a warren of rooms housing machinery and equipment, has changed very little since it was built. While some new equipment has been brought in, many of the original machines still exist. The techniques used include "extrusion", where hot

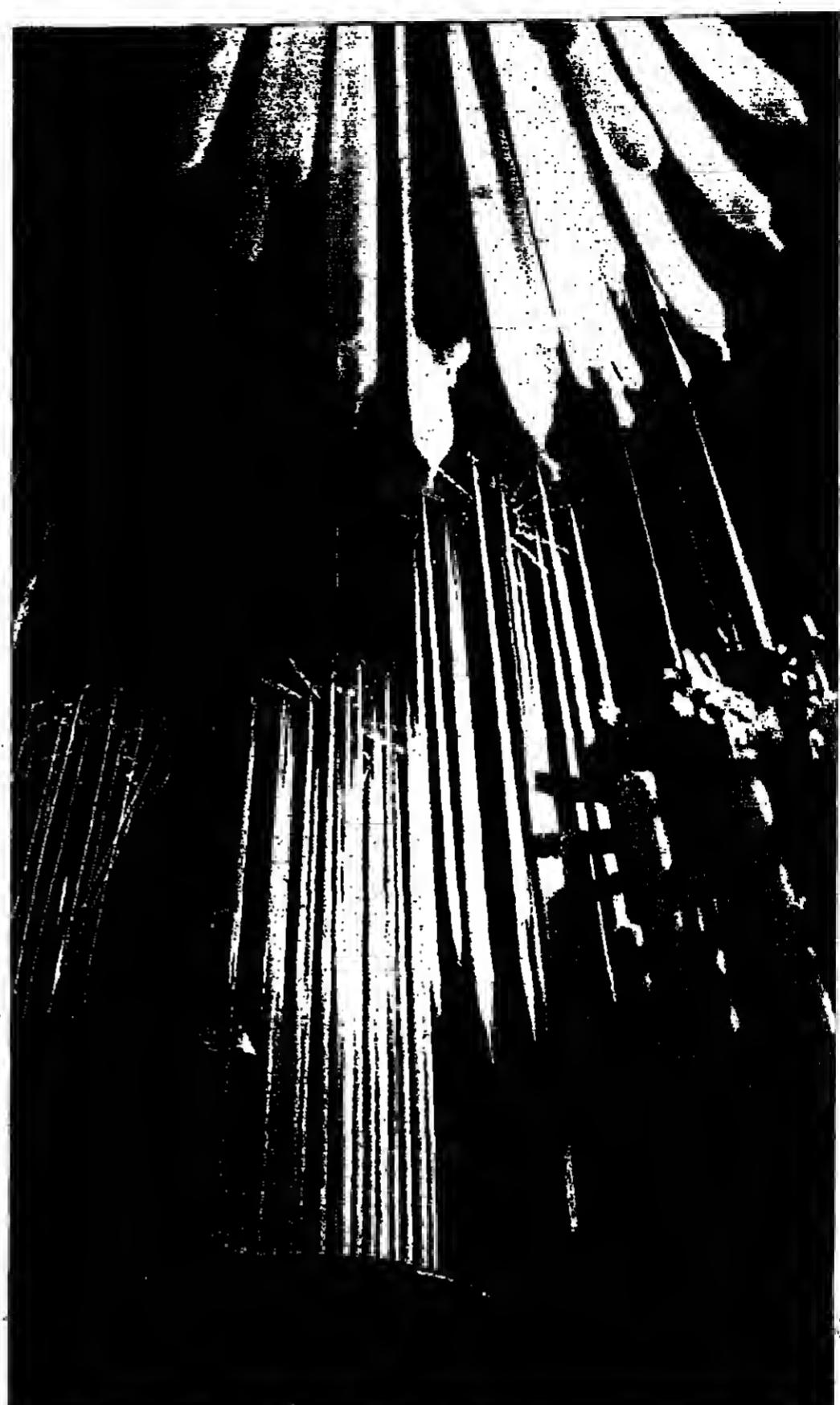
wax is forced through a circular tube then chopped off (household candles are made like this), "compression", where "slugs" of wax are compressed from powdered wax (used for nightlights), and "moulding", where wax is poured into moulds to set (dinner candles are made like this).

One method of candle making practised at Price's dates back to Roman times. This is the hand-making of long church tapers. It is done by continuously dipping long wicks into hot wax, or pouring hot wax down the length of them so that the wicks thicken gradually into long slender tapers. The process is slow and laborious. The four-foot long tapers hanging from a large wrought-iron carousel during my visit were being hand-dipped two or three times an hour, and would take weeks to complete. They are made on a commission-only basis for church clients. The company also makes enormous, shoulder-height, tree-trunk thick candles for St Paul's cathedral which cost £1,000 and take a year to make.

Attached to the factory is a large gift shop selling candles and candlesticks, glass jars, night lights, garden flares and other candle paraphernalia. Church candles are currently a big seller. "These were never considered fashionable for home use until recently," says Berry D'Arcy. "Now everybody wants them." Scented and aromatherapy candles are also a recent must-have. "Scented candles were big in the Sixties," she says. "Now they've come round again, people can't seem to get enough of them." Also on sale are boxes of factory sealed seconds, easily good enough to use and almost half the price of regular candles.

Sadly, however, the factory will not be on the site for much longer. Charming it may be; efficient and profitable it isn't. "The machinery is too old and the drains keep getting blocked; we can no longer produce the amount of candles needed to supply demand, both here and overseas," says Richard Simpson, the company director. Over the past two years they have been working on plans to move the factory out to a cheaper site outside London, yet still keep a smaller "heritage" type factory making candles which would be open to the public to come and see.

Wandsworthborough council, however, has just turned down



Roman candles: at Price's church tapers are still dipped by hand

Photograph: David Sandison

this plan. They were unhappy with it mainly because Price's also proposed a huge retail warehouse selling furniture, carpets and kitchen appliances on the old factory site. "They think we will be taking business away from other local retailers," says Richard Simpson. "But we'd done a professional study to see if this would be the case and found that the effects of our outlet on other retailers would be minimal. If anything, we would have brought more than a hundred new jobs to the area."

Price's may appeal against the

decision, but says Mr Simpson, "That takes a lot of time and money, neither of which we're terribly endowed with. It's all very depressing."

"So this may be the last Christmas at the candle factory," says Berry D'Arcy. "It's very sad for Price's and for Wandsworth because we've been here for so long and we're part of the community. But the harsh reality is that the building is old and the machinery is antiquated - we need today's technology."

All the more reason, perhaps, to rush along to Price's before it

shuts. The company continues to make very fine candles, scented or unscented, fancy or plain. And if the late 20th century has finally tolled the death knell of the Battersea factory, it has at least shown that not even electricity can replace the charm of a plain old-fashioned candle.

Price's Patent Candle Company, 110 York Rd, London SW11 3RU (0171-801 2030). The "candle extravaganza" sale continues until the end of December in the shop, open Mon-Sat 9.30am-6pm, Sun

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six of the best christmas crackers



1 **Luxury:** Smythson, £100 for six. Hot orange wrappers stencilled with golden quills, which come in a strong black and gold box that you can keep afterwards. The big bang takes real elbow work but it's worth it for the contents: Smythson's distinctive little leather-bound notebooks, key fobs, luggage tags and tiny diaries. Smythson, 44 New Bond Street, London W1Y 0DE (0171-629 8858 for mail order).

2 **Economy:** Woolworths, £7.99 for six. These are easily the best value of the lot. The "Improved Contents" label did not bode well, but the presents are good and surprisingly substantial for the price: perfumed soaps, lipstick holders, earrings and nail clippers. The mottoes are along Trivial Pursuit lines with questions rather than the usual old jokes. Call 0171-262 1222 for your nearest branch.

3 **DIY:** Liberty, £5.95 for four. Make-your-own crackers are a great idea for wrapping small presents in. The kit comes with clear instructions, hats, bangers and jokes (What flies and wobbles? — a jellycock). The only things you need to supply are the presents and cardboard tubes — start saving your loo-rolls now. Perfect for all ageing Blue Peter fans. Call 0171-734 1234 for your nearest branch.

4 **Wacky:** Party Bomb, Liberty £21.85. Our bomb went off with a rather dull pop but the flames made up for it and the force of the explosion toppled the canister on to the floor. The presents are all wrapped in tissue paper and included bandanas, whoopee cushions, a silk scarf, gliders and water bombs. No monos or has but lots of streamers, gliter and party blowers to keep everyone happy. Liberty: 0171-734 1234.

5 **Stylish:** Conran Shop, £18.50 for six. Lovely wrappers in gold and blue, each one slightly different, and they give a satisfying snap when pulled. Some felt the contents a little too down to earth — a mini whisk, nifty travel toothbrush, and a tiny padlock and key — but in general a fair cry from the usual plastic hats and bobs which end up lodged in the dog's throat. The Conran Shop, 81 Fulham Road, SW3 (0171-589 7401).

6 **Indulgent:** Liberty liqueur crackers, £29.95 for six. Beautiful crackers with delicious bottles of liqueur: just what you don't need at the end of an enormous meal, but what the hell? The bottles look as good as their contents taste. Guaranteed to please your guests, just as long as they don't start fighting over who gets the unbelievably delicious Eau de Noix. Liberty: 0171-734 1234.

'Honest' shoppers steal, so do children. At Christmas the pressure is on for store detectives

By Karen Falconer

It happened just around the corner from *Oliver*, the West End musical. I was walking down Regent Street under the early evening Christmas lights when, aware of someone on my tail, I turned to a modern-day Artful Dodger, his hand poised over my open-top bag. His two accomplices were stalling my friends.

He laughed and moved off as our eyes met: he'd almost been caught in the act. I was not so soft a target as they presumed. I had, after all, spent that morning discussing the rise in shop crime at Christmas with the experts — and had them to thank for hiding my purse at the bottom of my bag.

Unfortunately, there is nothing exceptional about this experience. Christmas is notorious as the best time to steal from shops and shoppers.

"There's a dramatic increase in theft at Christmas. Stores are

busier, there are more temporary workers who are less well trained in how to spot thieves, the shops are fuller and staff more tied up," explained Phil Edwards, seconded from Dixons to the Home Office as business adviser to the Crime Prevention Unit.

For, as the ranks of genuine shoppers swell, so do those of the shopping underworld, many of them perfecting their light-fingered lifts long before the average shopper might expect.

"Thieves take the old phrase 'shopping early for Christmas' very seriously," says Bob Goslin, group security controller at W H Smith and a former police officer.

"They start at the end of October so they can sell goods on for Christmas. The increase is significant in retail and other types of crime. There's more opportunity to pass on goods and therefore the problems increase."

But retailers and police do not

have an image of a typical thief in mind: it really can be anyone. They might be working in groups or alone; be young, old or middle-aged; male or female; well dressed or scruffy, as another security chief, Stuart Campbell of Selfridges, is keen to point out. "It's across the whole spectrum. We even have experience of a 'family' with a child in a pushchair. The child isn't stealing, but is a method of providing cover. The adult puts something in a bag on the pushchair and transfers it to the pillow under the child."

The idea of children being used to steal their own Christmas presents may seem abhorrent, but Fagins, it would seem, are as commonplace today as they were in Dickensian times. As laws on juvenile crime make it impossible to prosecute children under 12, so unscrupulous or impoverished parents can take advantage. "Sure, kids steal their own Christmas pre-

sents from the age of eight upwards," says Mr Goslin. "And some of the younger ones are clearly used by their parents because they can't be prosecuted."

Christmas is an open invitation to people to steal, as stores are stocked high with luxurious looking goodies, temptingly displayed. While this works effectively in stimulating our spending buds, it rubs in the fact not everyone can afford what they'd like. That's how professional thieves can drum up such a roaring trade each year.

"Professionals steal because other people want to buy Christmas presents cheaper," added Mr Goslin. "They sell them on and even steal to order. What happens is someone in the pub will say 'Can you get me a radio or a high value pen? The thief will bring it in the next night.' Car boot sales are another popular outlet for the pros."

Professional thieves can make a hefty profit, as they think nothing of walking out of a shop with 20 or 30 items. Sometimes, they go to the trouble of dressing up as staff members. Overcoats are stuffed with goods, empty shopping bags crammed with items, bags lined with tinfoil to stop electronic tagging systems from activating. In one up-market shop, the shop assistant turned his back to discover a whole table of silk/cashmere scarves wiped clean away: they turned up later in a black bin liner out the back, disguised as rubbish for an evening pick-up.

Electrical goods and clothes are popular items for the light fingered. But, according to the Home Office, not quite as desirable as food, alcohol and tobacco.

But they are not all taken by shop-theft specialists. Yuletide brings out another breed: normal shoppers who would never con-

sider themselves criminals. Suddenly, as the lights twinkle and their arms ache under the weight of carrier bags, they snap.

"It may be frustration in attracting a shop assistant in order to pay," says Mr Campbell. "Some people may walk out of the shop, but some will steal. My personal view is that opportunistic crime rises in this season so we try to ensure that we have sufficient staff to cater for that."

Others might do it for the kick. Whatever their motivation, naughty novices, unlike their professional counterparts, want small, easily concealable goods such as accessories, leather goods and gloves. And they often don't consider the consequences.

"There's a misconception that unless they leave the store, they can't be arrested and prosecuted," says Mr Campbell. "That's totally wrong. We will arrest and prosecute if we can

show sufficient evidence."

And, with a growing number of CCTV cameras, exit beepers and uniformed and plain-clothed security guards getting away with a casual theft may not be as easy as it looks. Or at least that's the message both stores and police are trying to get across with measures such as opening special mobile police units in shopping centres or main high streets and organising phone-rounds when a notorious thief is spotted.

Whatever the measures, crime costs stores £2.7bn each year, including £580m on security devices, according to the British Retail Consortium. In consumer terms, that's £120 extra on the family shopping bill each year.

At the end of the day, the honest consumer loses all ways round: handbags, purses, and increased prices of goods. It's almost enough to send you down to the car boot sale.



bazaar

Overheard
at Harrods grotto

Alia Hassan, aged 6: "Santa gave me a book but didn't read it with me. He asked me what I want for Christmas. I said a Pocahontas Village set and a puppy. I have never had one. I only have a bird and I can't play with it."

Rebecca Thomas, aged 5: "I always come here. I asked for magic pens that change colour and some mouse stickers."

Vac-Man competition

The answer: Stretch Armstrong's dog is called "Fetch Armstrong". The 10 winners are: Stephen Lawton, Duncan J. Corns, Mr Sims, James Bieda, J R Forsyth, Paul Westwood, Robin Long, Mrs J Baker, Nick Kemp, Sean Govier.

Good thing

Rubber egg cups, £1.65 for four

These chunky rubber rings are wasted as egg cups. Not that they wouldn't look groovy on your breakfast table — in colours of lime



green, peach, yellow and clear — but they have a wonderfully squidgy quality that makes them great fun to play with, stacking them in towers and so on. Small children would love them, too. A great present for friends who think they have seen everything. From Stephen Bredin, Ground Floor, 50 Underwood St, London N1 7JX (tel/fax: 0171-251 5343) Add p&p to price.

Mad thing

Salt & pepper pots as wheels, £23.95 for pair

If you are already feeling too weighed down by the excesses of the season to find enough energy to pass the salt and pepper, you'd better put these on your Christmas list. Park them in the middle of the table and then give them a quick nudge in the direction of whoever needs to season their turkey or sprouts. But beware: things could quickly degenerate as they are bound to spark fond memories of Scalextric sets. From The Conran Shop, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 6RD. Call 0171-589 7401 for mail-order details

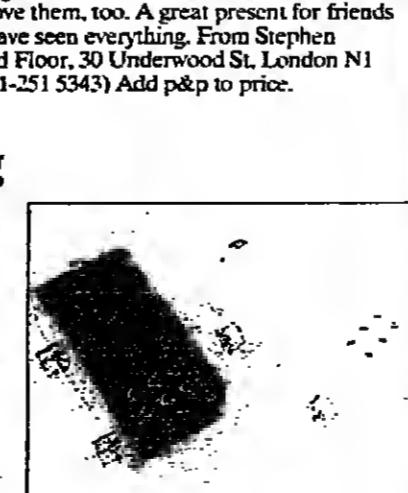
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The play's the thing, the pay's the problem

Actors lucky enough to find work in the theatre are paid so poorly as to make them speechless with embarrassment. A few are paid what they're worth: the rest must grin and bear it. By Georgina Brown



Maggie Smith is 'a licence to print money', according to one producer, who believes she is receiving around 10 per cent of the box-office for 'Three Tall Women'.



Dame Judi Dench is indisputably worth more to the National than the annual basic £41,000, but they make sure she can fit in more lucrative work such as playing M in 'Goldeneye'.



In 'Break of Day', Nigel Perry plays an actor who has to decide between a well-paid 'telly' or touring Chekhov on a pittance, a familiar dilemma to most actors, including Perry.



For the stars, television drama can be extremely financially rewarding. Kevin Whately is one of the highest paid; he earns £350,000 for each series of 'Peak Practice'.



Other are less lucky, though still better off than actors in the theatre: Derek Thompson, best known for his role in 'Casualty' as Charlie, squeaked at his derisory £80,000 per series



For those who are not destined for drama stardom, the best thing is acting in commercials. One actress says: 'If you're a girl-next-door type, you'll do better in telly'.

Robert: How can I tour for nine months for no money with a tiny theatre company no one will watch? And yet, last night, I opened the door on a whole world... I didn't go to university like Tess; sometimes I did the part - but it's not responsible. Being an actor isn't responsible. It might be if it were waited.

So runs a scene from *The Break of Day*, Timberlake Wertenbaker's new play, in which Robert, a forty-something actor, confronts a familiar thespian dilemma. Should he take the part of Vereshin in a touring production of *Three Sisters*, or should he do a 'telly', in this case a thin role in a tatty hospital drama series? At one level, it's a self-regarding and in-joke piece of writing since, in real life, Nigel Terry, the actor playing Robert, is playing Vereshin in Out of Joint's parallel touring production of *Three Sisters*. What's more, the discussion would have been sharper if the telly job had been well written - good television drama is no longer a rarity - and was therefore a tougher choice. Nevertheless, the scene makes

several valid points, among them that stage actors are fabulously badly paid and open to exploitation because they are in the business for something other than money.

Precisely how little actors earn from theatre work is rarely discussed. Embarrassment prevents them talking about it among themselves. But the facts speak for themselves. An actor working in the mainstage at the Royal Court, for example, gets the Equity-agreed minimum of £240 a week in the Theatre Upstairs, it's £198.90. It's non-negotiable (rendering even Rottweiler agents toothless) and democratic, which means that an actor with 30 years' experience playing a big part earns the same as an actor who left drama school last year and has two lines. In subsidised, regional rep, the Equity minimum shrinks to £178 (£237 for the superstars) plus a paltry touring allowance. From these figures deduct the agent's fee (10 per cent); tax, national insurance and such expenses as fares to auditions, £98 for appearing in *Spotlight*, then consider the pain of a bad review, and finally wonder why anyone thinks it's worth it. Even more Victorian are the terms of the contract

which allow employers to give actors two weeks' notice and close the show, but forbids the actors from behaving similarly.

These are the lucky ones. Of 42,000 Equity members working in theatre, film and TV last year, 23 per cent didn't even walk on (for doing exactly this, but naked, five women in *Hysteria* in the West End are currently paid £15 a night). The average time worked was 16 weeks - only 15 per cent earn more than £20,000 and 15 per cent worked more than 37 weeks (probably the same 15 per cent).

The best it gets in subsidised theatre is at the National. For doing two and a half shows per week (obviously an impossibility, but that's the way the sums are done), the minimum weekly wage is £270; top whack is £789, but only eight actors currently earn this much - Judi Dench, Diana Rigg and Michael Gambon among them. On top of this is a fee for every additional performance (minimum £18, maximum £69, average £36). A canny actor will be doing three plays in rep to earn as much as possible. The canniest, most marketable actor will also be fitting in telly, film (only 8 per cent of actors make it into movies), and voice-overs (£360 for a couple of hours' reading) when they can. Not that anyone feels particularly sorry for an actor working at the National.

One actor who has just finished a play there said: 'You want to work at the National almost more than anywhere because it means you can organise your life. You know where you'll be for the next six months, you spot Richard Eyre in the canteen and see lots of actors on motorbikes and you feel you've got a proper, manly job. The trouble is that when you're there, you long for the telly that gives you your own caravan in the Yorkshire Dales with golden eagles flying above and every couple of hours a lovely girl bringing a cup of coffee. Then you get that and find yourself trotting on to say your couple of lines and you wonder if anyone will ever take you seriously again. The grass is always greener on the other side.'

Certainly it's greener at the National than the RSC, where you have to do more for rather less. For a 40-hour week you get £220, with a subsistence fee for being in Stratford of £41.04. Leads get £600 a week, which explains why so many find Stratford a resistible invitation, particularly when contracts must be signed for 60 weeks and the distance from London prohibits doing a telly or ad to supplement the income. It also explains why Alex Jennings reads so many books on tape. 'The opportunity to work on Shakespeare with some of the best directors and designers is very tempting,' said one actor. 'So is the chance to play four different roles in rep, but you have to leave your family in London and you come to a point where you can't afford the financial or emotional consequences.'

Actors can and do say no, but

turning down the opportunity to work at Stratford or the Royal Court because you are holding out for a better-paid telly is never easy. 'What you really want is the job that attracts the next job,' said one actor. 'The advantage of theatre is that it's a permanent showcase - there's always the chance that your agent will turn up, bringing Steven Spielberg with her.'

The picture is a little brighter in the commercial West End, where market forces come into operation. Equity minimum is £232, but if an agent can't get this up to between £250 and £350, they aren't trying. There aren't many 'marque' names - actors who puts bums on seats - currently lighting up the West End, but where there is one, there's probably a contract worth around £3,000 a week. According to one producer, Maggie Smith, on a guaranteed amount plus probably 10 per cent of the box-office, will be getting at least £5,000 a week. 'Maggie's a licence to print money, but there aren't many like her.' Zoë Wanamaker, who has considerable pulling power, will be on around £1,000 a week for *The Glass Menagerie*. A big star in a huge musical can earn £20,000 (a lump sum plus royalty), but according to Nick Allott in Cameron Mackintosh's office, that has only happened once. To whom, he ain't telling, but odds on it was Jonathan Pryce in *Oliver!*. The biggest stars in musicals are likely to be clearing up between £5,000 and £10,000. The musical ensemble, in stark contrast, will get between £300 and £350 a week.

To a certain extent, this is meaningless compared to what an actor can earn on the television. No one would disagree that Judi Dench is worth very much more to the

National than an annual basic of £41,000, but the National can keep its conscience clear by arranging her schedule so that it's easy for her to supplement her income with playing M in *Goldeneye* and making a series of *As Time Goes By*. Even Dame Judi, however, cannot command the ludicrous £30,000 Nick Berry reputedly earns for an episode as PC Rowan in *Heartbeat*. (Both Berry and Robbie Coltrane have a £1,000,000 two-year contract with Granada, but this is the most cynical end of the market where a lead actor can get 50 per cent of a production's entire budget and the rest earn little more than that would on the theatre.) Dame Judi is more likely to be in Patricia Routledge's league - Miss Routledge allegedly earns £7,500 for an episode of *Keep Your Appearance*. (No wonder Derek Thompson squeaked at the derisory £3,400 he was getting to play Charlie in *Casualty*, small beer indeed compared to the £350,000 Kevin Whately gets for a series of *Peak Practice*.) Drama pay better than soaps on the whole. *EastEnders*' Wendy Richard reportedly earns £10,000 a year for more than 150 episodes, and regulars on *Brookside* are thought to get as little as £250 an episode, which is what

you would get for saying 'Yes, Constable,' in a telly drama.

There's little justice in any of it, and actors are so grateful to be working that they seldom complain. But one actor currently working in the West End in a transfer of a play is speaking for many when he deplores the way in which actors are themselves subsidising the subsidised theatre. 'My investment in a new play as important as the backbones who only come in once a play has proved itself,' he argues. Indeed, the greater part of this actor's career within the subsidised theatre has been funded by 'hard graft' elsewhere - commercials, teaching, voice-overs and television. 'The problem in this profession is that one can be forced into becoming a commodity rather than an artist. Actors want to be artists, and of course insecurity contributes to our art, but there's a limit to how much indignity we should suffer. No one would say to a plumber, "You enjoy your work so please give me a top-quality job for less than the going rate." I don't think we should have to apologise for the need for government subsidy of the theatre. Actors, like teachers and nurses, should be valued. If the National Lottery changed the rules and made available money for people, would the management give it to actors?'

The implications of starving the subsidised theatre are significant. Already you won't find experienced, committed, middle-aged actors slumming it in regional rep. That territory has been left to the young and inexperienced. Another effect is a gradual decline in the quality of acting. As one drama teacher said: 'I've already begun to notice how students try to be attractive in their acting, rather than go for something truer, because they believe that will make them more saleable.'

One actress I spoke to disagrees. Discovering your saleability is what being an actor is about, she says. When she left drama school, she thought, like every other student, she would do the classics. 'It didn't take me long to realise I wasn't that kind of actor. You have to let the right niche find you: if you're a girl-next-door type, you'll do better on telly.' Her combination of warmth and absence of danger proved to be a valuable commodity. She became a Persil mum, a Fairy Liquid mum, a Bupa mum, and heamed through building society and bank ads, earning £200-250 for a day's work (each ad took a couple of days) often in exotic locations (travel fees extra) and then 'residuals', a percentage of the original fee each time the ad was shown. But the big time in commercials is the buyout, when an actor signs an exclusivity contract to do no other commercials for an existing product. A paint company paid her £30,000 the first year, £35,000 the second and £40,000 for the third for her agreement to do no other DIY ads. For bigger names - Bob Hoskins, Maureen Lipman - such exclusivity in something like the BT ads is worth hundreds of thousands. It's good to talk. Pity so few can afford to do it.

Perhaps culture is just a happy accident



THOMAS STURCLIFFE

tion, reminding us that many biological characteristics are actually spin-offs of selected characteristics. Perhaps culture is simply a happy accident.

Perhaps, even if readers brought up in an artistic rather than scientific tradition may find its treatment of aesthetic pleasure a touch cursory. The bulk of it is taken up with an explanation of the way that we are creatures of our universe, our perceptions moulded by its physics. To venture a risky echo, you might say that we have been made in its image.

But when it comes to making direct connections between the adaptive features of our primitive ancestors and a modern gallery-goer, the arguments can seem a little unconvincing. Barrow, for instance, writes about painted landscape triggering aversive instincts of refuge and threat.

But simple ideas of survival don't seem to be able to account for the complexity of our aesthetic taste here, the fact that "beauty" and "safety" have rarely, if ever, been synonymous.

In the 18th century, for example, a great cultural shift took place, in which old ideas of landscape beauty were overturned (a mental schism wittily recorded in *Sense and Sensibility*). Scenery that had been 'repulsive' and 'distressing' became evocative and stirring. Scenery that had been 'beautiful' and 'handsome' became, for some at least, dull and utilitarian. Does such a shift betray a sudden liberation from our biological drives or merely a new twist in their complex effect?

Similarly, Barrow's intriguing account of the importance of symmetry to primitive humans (if you see a symmetrical face staring at you from the bushes it may be about to make you its lunch) is directly at odds with Egyptian art, which gives a huge value to the profile, a resolutely asymmetrical vision of the world. Professor Barrow also has to strain a bit to reconcile our primitive drive towards order with a public distaste for modernist architecture.

To be fair to Barrow, he gives early warning against a crude misreading of evolu-

The Sleeping Beauty

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Sparrow cradles and lunar mushrooms

Michael Glover relishes the diversity of new poetry for children

It has become something of a habit at this time of year to settle into the comfortable armchair that is a new book by Shirley Hughes, and feel oneself transported back in time, to that glorious epoch when the Bodley Head was still an independent publishing house and not, as it is now, a couple of desks and once-proud logo mislaid somewhere in Random House.

And so it is again in the collection of verses and pictures for very young children, about the fun of splashing through mud, building sandcastles and observing cows on "lazy" summer days that go to make up *Rhymes for Annie Rose* (Bodley Head, £9.99), the whole thing rhythmically regular in a lulling, deeply conventional sort of way.

By sharp contrast, *Skip Across the Ocean* (Frances Lincoln, £9.99), a pictorially luscious collection of lullabies, action rhymes and nursery rhymes from across the world, wears its multi-cultural heart on its sleeve. Here are action rhymes from the Yoruba; a sad song of an absent father from the Inuit; and a cradle song of the sparrows from Peru. It all goes to show how similar the lullabies of different cultures and nations are to each other. Unfortunately, many of the translations into English are so dull and rhythmically broken-backed that they read like William Carlos Williams on a bad day.

The most useful anthology of poetry for younger children this winter is Michael Bird's *The Grasshopper Laughs* (Faber, £8.99). The illustrations by Andrew Stooke don't try to make a splash in their own right, thereby distracting us from the poems, and the selection itself moves easily from past to present, from Hughes to Anon - it doesn't feel at all inappropriate, for example, to have that old favourite "Michael Finnegan" beside an Elizabethan lyric by George Peele.

Kaye Umansky is still best known for that excellent tongue-teasing picture book, *Push the Jam Jam*. This autumn she shows herself a very sprightly and accomplished versifier in two book-length story poems, *The Night I Was Chased By A Vampire* (Orion, £7.99) and *The Empty Suit of Armour* (Orion, £7.99). The funnier and more winning of the two is the latter, about a suit of armour that clanks dourly out of the castle and off into the night in pursuit of - what? Verse-making of this regular kind is usually marred by verbal redundancies or silly archaisms. Umansky sustains our interest, and a consistently excellent level of writing, right to the poem's fine (and surprising) conclusion.

Matthew Sweeney, that surreal anecdotalist, brings his skewed perspectives on everyday reality well within reach of an eight-year-old in *Fatso in the Red Suit* (Faber, £8.99), his second collection of poetry for children. A poem called "Mushrooms on the Malvern" is typical of Sweeney at his best. Why do mushrooms appear overnight? And why do they have brown flecks on their heads? They've been dropped from the moon, that's why. The flecks are particles of meteorites. Sweeney specialises in these sudden shifts of focus, from the ordinary to the macabre.

Lindsay MacRae's *You Can't Stay in Granary Off a Bus* (Viking, £9.99) is a raucous, zestful, social-realistic slam through subject areas which seldom turn up in children's poetry - the child feeding her disabled mother, for example, or the refugee who expresses himself through his violent paintings. These are excellent. Unfortunately, there are too many times when the rather lumpish versifying makes for bad poems, and when the jokes seem aimed to please adults - the poem about that existential dog called John-Paul Sartre, for example.

The best poetry book of the autumn is Raymond Wilson's *Puffin Book of Classic Verse* (Viking, £14.99), in almost every respect (except that the poems ascribed to "Anne Bradstreet" are the work of Anne Bradstreet, a founding mother of American poetry) an exemplary piece of publishing, especially in its apposite juxtapositions. Bunting's humble homage to scholasticity, "Upon the Snail", cowers beside Tennyson's terrible vision of "The Kraken".

A double life at the Woolwich

War poet and suburbanite, Roy Fuller made the ordinary peculiar. By Peter Parker

Roy Fuller: *Writer and Society* by Neil Powell, Carcanet, £25

Although Roy Fuller was elected Oxford Professor of Poetry in 1968, he apparently made the "frequent, ironic-rueful" complaint that he was a poet who never quite caught on. Too young to be a Thirties Poet, too old to be a Movement Poet and too subsequently prolific to be considered a War Poet, he defied the easy categorisation that critics like, He spent his working life as a solicitor for the Woolwich Building Society, lived in suburban south London and remained married to the same woman from the age of twenty-four until his death.

Defying the widely accepted belief that scandal and sensation are the principal ingredients of biography, Neil Powell has fashioned from this ostensibly unpromising material a book that is both finely discriminating and wholly absorbing. This reflects Fuller's own sense that "ordinary" life has its particular value

and fascination. "I suppose for me everyday life has never ceased to seem poetic life," he wrote in 1980, in what sounds like an echo of Edward Upward's *alter ego*, the Marxist poet Alan Sebrell, and Fuller's later volumes of poetry are almost exclusively concerned with the quotidian, more often than not derived from observations jotted down in notebooks.

Fuller was born in Lancashire in 1912, and spent much of his childhood, after his father's premature death, in rented rooms in Blackpool. He read widely, but left school at sixteen to become an articled clerk with a local law firm. He subsequently moved to London to study law, and like most young men with literary aspirations, was influenced both poetically and politically by the Auden Generation, expounding Marxist manifestos in letters to friends. An early poem appeared in the *Sunday Referee* and earned him a penknife, but more orthodox payment came from edi-

tors such as Julian Symons (who became perhaps his closest friend) and John Lehmann. Fuller later described his first volume of *Audenesque Poems* as "satisfactorily rare", but at the time it received praise from Stephen Spender (whom he greatly admired) in the *New Statesman*.

Fuller's experiences during the war, in which he served with the navy, were thoroughly disillusioning. Unlike the poets of an earlier war, whose socialism was moulded by their service with the rank and file, close contact with 4,000 men crammed into a troopship led Fuller to the "appalling discovery that he had been mistaken about the essential nature of human beings; it was the most traumatic moment of his adult life, and it permanently affected his political philosophy". In later years Fuller, who was given to teasing, cultivated an old buffer persona (particularly in his Establishment duties at the Arts

Council and the BBC), but Powell suggests that the real shift that took place was that of "faith in a culturally enabling socialism giving way to a politically uncompromised faith in culture".

After the war, Fuller found it difficult to recreate himself as a poet, and Powell is a severe judge of the first post-war collection *Epiaphs and Occasions* (1949). "Something has clearly gone wrong with the register of these poems," he writes, and one suspects that like Sassoon after the First World War, Fuller was floundering absurd in search of a new voice. He had begun to write novels, and Powell's lucid discussion of Fuller's fiction will undoubtedly send readers in search of these volumes. The ambiguities in Fuller's character, which were never wholly resolved and perhaps explain the fence of irony he threw up around himself and his work, led to a preoccupation with "the idea of the dou-

ble man, the divided self", claims Powell. Many of the novels, cast in the form of psychological thrillers in the Greene-Hitchcock tradition, seem to show Fuller exploring the contradictions he found in his own life.

His attention to the oddities of the everyday ("pedestrian peculiarities," as he called them in one poem) and his habitual mode of defensive irony make Fuller a very English writer, and thus in danger of being underrated. But a great deal is going on beneath the surface. The sudden notes of unmediated feeling are all the more powerful for emerging from the immaculately groomed, neatly moustachioed facade.

In this eminently equitable life, Powell never attempts to make larger claims for Fuller than he is able to sustain by example and analysis. His criticisms are sharp, terse and often very funny, and his tone throughout is a perfect blend of affection and scepticism.

Suspicious of beauty

Jeff Nuttal regrets the drift of poetry into stand-up comedy

One of the problems facing the British poet is the embarrassment and scepticism extended towards poetry by the British public. Kathleen Raine and Alan Ross are left over from a time when this was not so. Unashamedly, they both write in a state of trance; they both pursue beauty in their subject matter and in their way of writing; they both write in lyric, which is to say poetic, language which doesn't feel it has to disguise itself as conversation, stand-up comedy, community activity, consumer commodity or encounter therapy.

Raine's *On A Deserted Shore* (Agenda, 5 Cranborne Court, Albert Bridge Rd, SW11 LPE, £6.00) is a sequence of 130 irregular stanzas about the death of a lover. The very subject matter places Raine in danger; this is an ocean where many have swum, from Keats's Isabella watering her basil to Nelson Eddie seeing spring break through again. Raine is doubly prone to this danger because she sees her dead love immortalised in dream ("only in sleep / Sweet island voices that make us weep") and nature ("Was waterfall, was fleeting flame, was empty air"). Even Christ Himself appears ("she took him for the gardener") and consoles the bereaved by embodying undying love: "a face too merciful / for my devil-peopled soul to bear."

So skilled a poet is Raine, however, so complete is her intensity of belief and feeling, that she soars above all the pitfalls. Clichés do not appear, nor a single scrap of tired language. We may not share her faith in the psychic muscularity of love but its hold is firm enough to keep her work fine. A similar faith incidentally, held firm for Francis Horowitz who comes to mind as Raine's main follower.

Alan Ross maintains his poetic identity at quite a different level. I doubt if a mind as acute as Ross's could be entirely unaware of the convincing charisma he achieves by presenting himself as a character not a million miles from the heroes of Greene and Conrad. The poems in *After Pusan* (Harvill, £9.99) constitute a creative re-start when Ross took a trip to Seoul in Korea after a breakdown in the mid-Eighties. He went in the wake of Isabella Bird, a Victorian travel writer whose account of an Oriental paradise contrasts wryly with the modern Korea with

its Demilitarised Zone, where long hair and sandals are not admitted, and its Buddhist monastery where the monks sell kitsch and watch baseball on TV. This is recounted in the prose introduction, a piece of crisp journalism that recalls the days of *Penguin New Writing* and the *London Magazine*. James Cameron comes to mind, another Englishman with a broken heart and an impenetrable decency.

Ross's verse, when we get to it, is not Imagism but it is rooted in Imagism. It seems appropriate that a man who finds his regeneration in the war-torn East should take so much from the translations of Pound and Waley. The contrast between images of modern war and of an ancient culture serve him well. Perfumes evoke lost loves and moments in passing places are snapped into vision, often with graceful rhymes. Sometimes, as in the short poem "Amethyst", he achieves greatness.

It was during Ross's editorship of the *London Magazine* that British poetry began to get prickly palms about beauty as the defining concern of art. It was then that poets, bursting their typewriter ribbons to make verse sound like casual speech, virtually created the mode of the alternative comedian. Matters of moment, i.e. life, love and death, are covered in a tone appropriate to the ordering of groceries, a sort of widow's shrug.

Suburbia governed the arts, the *sangfroid* of the privet hedge and the muslin curtain, moderation and reserve in the service of respectable privacy.

John Hagley actually is a sort of stand-up comic, the most recent in the line of performing poets from Beachcomber through Ivor Cutler to Spike Hawkins, though he lacks the obtuse oddness of Cutler and the crazy Dada of Hawkins. *Love Cuts* (Methuen, £8) is his fifth volume of disposable comedy. There is a crafty deployment of assonance and a jokey punning. "Someone takes precautions with his safe sex." There are faint echoes of a remembered Catholicism and politically correct bisexual punchlines. The whole takes place in a seedy urban consciousness of boredom, telly and playground nostalgia, the very home of alternative comedy.

U.A. Fanthorpe has stronger religious echoes. In *Safe As*

Houses (Peterloo Poets, £10) her cycle of poems about William Tyndale, who translated the first English Bible, have him levelling the high Latin with neighbourly English common sense. Fanthorpe shares with Stevie Smith the voice of a quirky female individualist, without pretension but with a refusal to be deceived that borders on a refusal to be convinced; and with a hoydenish sense of mischief.

She is at her best applying this voice to received texts (by Kierkegaard, Ibsen, Sir Thomas Browne etc.) but she can also be moving and exact in her details about the Second World War, an event in which the British suburban spirit discovered its strength. "O rare little world," she writes, "Imagined to gentle the English through war and Depression, and war, and peace and anything else, cheap, unpretending, with your faith in solutions..." Although Fanthorpe can puncture the cosiness of such a world with some traumatising descriptions of the Blitz, this is the world in which she operates.

Andrew Westerman also has an optimum pull towards the Forties and Fifties. The title sequence of *The End Of The Pier Show* (Carcanet, £9.95) is linked with references to a faded seaside resort, another happy-hunting-ground of the British suburban vision. Westerman writes with a tense controlled sadness about his fading eyesight in a world which is fading away. The sometimes irritating perfection of the metre sounds in the ear as a level, dogged voice, articulating its way through a life that is certainly no better than it should be and quite a bit less than might have been expected.

In the suburban vision, a stoic pessimism is only sensible. Michael Glover observes it faithfully in *Possible Horizons* (Sinclair-Stevenson, £7.99). In the deserted seaside town where Glover finds himself, he casts himself as clown which is a mistake; there is nothing clownish about his view of poetry and the human predicament. Poetry is "debased, sullied, frail, absurd". It emerges as a rat to gnaw the party debris. Humanity licks at sunbeams and tastes filth. On a trip to France, Glover is rescued from his pessimism by Picasso, Blanchot and Bracque, but he is only a tourist. His last poem sees him back home, painting the sea grey.

Seagull visions

Richard Tyrell finds pain and pitbulls in new Irish poetry

Derek Mahon wrote some of the best poems of the Seventies and Eighties, and in *The Hudson Letter* (Gallery, £6.99) has written the loneliest of the Nineties. Opening with a love poem, proceeding through translations and clerihews, it ends with a long sequence evoking post-divorce bachelorhood.

Lonely is the word. Mahon describes a nightmare life. He is elated when five messages ("5!5") are left on his answering machine. But she can also be moving and exact in her details about the Second World War, an event in which the British suburban spirit discovered its strength. "O rare little world," she writes, "Imagined to gentle the English through war and Depression, and war, and peace and anything else, cheap, unpretending, with your faith in solutions..." Although Fanthorpe can puncture the cosiness of such a world with some traumatising descriptions of the Blitz, this is the world in which she operates.

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The Tyrone poet John Montague is more prized in America than Britain, but his *Collected Poems* (Gallery, £13.95) might change all that. It opens with his three long poems, exhibiting his peculiar ability - a breakdown of complex issues into observations that have the power of myth about them. In one master-stroke, he evokes a whole town by imagining a seagull fly overhead and peer down on its people and their symbols.

Montague's subjects are the sectarianisms of Ulster, the lost histories of Gaelic Ireland, the organic chains of local life and the family. At his best, he shows how basic things in Ireland, a gaunt farmhouse or a leaping fire in a Catholic grate, are part of a web of historical and folkloric associations.

He has a deep understanding of character, especially the psychologies and habits of rural people. And his skill with the ordinary details of life make reading him - as was said about Seamus Heaney - feel "as if our minds had been refurbished."

Brendan Kennelly, on the other hand, surely doesn't mean us to take *Poetry My Arse* (Bloodaxe, £9.95) seriously, but it has rollicking episodes that make it a good Christmas stocking filler. Kennelly writes excessively, often poorly, often with a great humour. This is an "epic" about the life of Aec de Horner, who, we are told, is the type of artist you find in post-colonial cities like Dublin - a Brendan Behan for the Nineties. In her *Collected Poems* (Carcanet, £9.95) she recollects sitting at a table counting out beats. Her fastidious nature underlies a poetry that has flourished in the last decade, though she admits she had a long struggle with spontaneity.

There are two strands to Boland. One the "domestic" poet who probes the nature of womanhood, imagining the wife-and-mother as a sort of Promethean heroine. The other has a roving intelligence that links subtle, often historical, ideas - as in "That the Science of Cartography is Limited", where the straggling roads you see on Irish maps remind her of work given to starving labourers during the Great Famine. Her images are always precise, her candour and self-knowledge clear, and whether writing about a black fan, greenhouse fruit or German girls in exile, each poem is engraved like a cameo.



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Roy Fuller (right) chats to Laurie Lee at a London party in 1935

Detecting Dorothy's secrets

The creator of Peter Wimsey turned personal tragedy into intellectual games. Marion Shaw reports

The Letters of Dorothy L Sayers
ed by Barbara Reynolds
Hodder, £25

These are jolly letters. The ripping letters home of the schoolgirl Dorothy (how exhausting she must have been as a daughter) lead to the bossy letters of the undergraduate and then the argumentative, erudite, no-nonsense letters of the teacher, publisher's assistant and detective author of the last twenty years this volume covers. There were twenty more years of life and writing to come, but 1936 is an appropriate point of departure. As her editor says, Dorothy L Sayers was by then an extremely successful writer of twelve novels and a West-End comedy, and 'Lord Peter Wimsey' was known, loved and occasionally hated the world over.

In that year, however, the year after T S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was performed there, she was somewhat surprisingly asked to write a play for production in Canterbury Cathedral. This marked a change of direction in her career; henceforth she was to devote herself to religious writings and translation, becoming, as Barbara Reynolds says, "one of the outstanding lay theologians of her time." That phase of her life remains to be told; what we have here is what many of her readers will consider of sufficient interest the epistolary autobiography of the writer of such gems of detective fiction as *The Nine Tailors* and *Gaudy Night*.

Discovering the autobiographical plot of the letters requires a certain amount of detective work from the reader, not in its facts, which Barbara Reynolds painstakingly charts, but in its feelings. Two, perhaps three, crises of some magnitude were endured by Sayers: the departure of the man she loved, John Cowmios, because he wouldn't marry her and have children, and she wouldn't live with him without marriage and children; the birth of an illegitimate son by a man other than Cowmios, and the rearing of this son as a secret, often elaborately kept, from her parents, most of her friends, and from the son himself; and third, the mental deterioration of her husband, Atherton Fleming.

These unhappinesses and anxieties were brushed off or silenced. Writing to her parents at 17 about her first communion, she concludes the account of dresses, veils, and other arrangements for a service of great importance to her, with: "PS: I never can write about my feelings - that's why I haven't," and this sets the pattern of her correspondence. When Cowmios left for America, her only comment was: "I'm feeling a bit dull at present - so many people seem to be away - especially all my new friends. John hasn't so much as sent a postcard since he went, though I hear from Dakers that he is alive and well, only very busy." When she wrote to the cousin who was to care for her child, she first pretended to be making arrangements on behalf of a friend, and then, when the truth was told, in a "Strictly Confidential" sealed letter within a letter, the confession concludes with: "But never mind about me - don't think about it, but just be fond of the little chap." The rest of the letter is concerned with practical arrangements, including possible difficulty in feeding the baby, "because he has been breast-fed." Such stoicism sometimes seems almost like indifference or callousness, as when her son's catching scarlet fever elicits the breezy "Dear oh dear! What a beastly nuisance for you ... Of course [he] must go to hospital - it is never right to nurse infectious diseases at home... Anyway, don't worry - children will get these things."

The displacement of feeling into common-sense action is, of course, the substance of detective fiction, at least in the



Pure genius: Dorothy Sayers, with fellow novelist Helen Simpson, in convivial mood at the Detection Club

"golden age" to which Sayers belonged. Horror, violence and grief is cerebralised into an intellectual puzzle and the triumph of reason over chaos provides the reassurance the genre offers its readers. The mind that plotted the successful unravelling, via the rationality of Peter Wimsey, of the mystery of the poison-pen letters of *Gaudy Night* could plot its own conquest over jealousy and abandonment by force of argument, by making a rhetorical game out of the disaster. When the recently married Cowmios returned to England in 1924 ("Both of us did what we swore we'd never do," Sayers pointed out) she argued with and harangued him in a way which energised her. Their passion relationship was irrecoverable - he was married, she had a child - and this gave her the distance to anatomise where he had been at fault. The dissection was liberating and produced some of her most outspoken comments, mostly on sex and women's need to be "fruitful": "When I see men callously

and cheerfully denying women the full use of their bodies, while insisting with sobs and howls on the satisfaction of their own, I simply can't find it heroic, or kind, or anything but pretty rotten and feeble". Sayers said that her novels were not autobiographical, except in their locations - the East Anglian fen country of her childhood in *The Nine Tailors*, and the beloved Oxford of her undergraduate days in *Gaudy Night* - and the occasional inclusion of sayings, events and personages from her life. One of the pleasures of this collection of letters is in seeing chance details from the life turn up as evidence in the novels. Most famously, there was Maurice Ridley, who was seen by Sayers as an undergraduate reading his Newdigate Prize poem in 1913, was forgotten in the flesh but remembered in the fiction as Lord Peter Wimsey, then reincarnated in 1935 as the Chaplain of Balliol College, and was recognised, like a vital clue in the scheme of things, as "the perfect Peter

Wimsey. Height, voice, charm, smile, manner, outline of features, everything..."

Ridley appeared just as the concluding love scenes of *Gaudy Night* were being written. This was to be almost the last of her detective novels and she thought of it as "not really [one] at all, but a novel with a mild detective interest of an almost entirely psychological kind." She had begun to grow tired of the suffering of detective fiction and was ready to move from the imposition of secular order to the revelation of a spiritual order. "I have been talking for twenty years to conceal my thoughts," she imagines Wimsey saying to Harriet Vane, as they seal their courtship, and his words provide a kind of farewell verdict on these 37 years of letters. They too are talking to conceal thought, to avoid confession, but, like Wimsey's talk, they are not thoughtless or without purpose. And they make a deuced good read, don't you know, quite gas and garters, as their author would say.

Fur coats, cocaine and Franz Kafka

Ian Thompson marvels at the life of Milena '4711' Jesenska, favourite correspondent of St Franz of Prague

Kafka, Love and Courage: The Life of Milena Jesenska
by Mary Hockaday
Deutsch, £17.99

stories to his friends sitting at a table in the beer hall... but he certainly didn't laugh while he wrote." Both Levi and Margarete Bloch were deported to Auschwitz from the same Italian detention centre. It was called Fossoli; but Fraulein Bloch never came back. Neither did Milena Jesenska, the subject of this intriguing biography. Best known as the recipient of Kafka's *Letters to Milena*, she was a glamorous Czech journalist who perished in a concentration camp outside Berlin. A gentle, she had helped Jews escape occupied Prague.

Of all Kafka's women, Milena Jesenska was the most alluring. A green-eyed beauty, she was ten years younger than the Jewish

author but fell for his gracious tact and humour. Kafka's squirmish distaste for all things ripe and physical, however, inhibited sex. This was largely an epistolary passion; and Milena's letters were a comfort to Kafka against his anxieties. Only Kafka's side of the correspondence survives; letters were sent almost daily, an out-pouring that still glows with intimacy. It is said by some biographers that Milena was the one love of Kafka's life.

In post-war Czechoslovakia, however, Milena was regarded as an anti-communist bourgeoisie deviant. Her posthumous rehabilitation did not begin until 1989 and the Velvet Revolution. Mary Hockaday's biography of this beguiling woman, *Kafka, Love and Courage*, is a triumph of imaginative reconstruction. It paints a lively picture of coffee-house Prague with its fur coats and pre-war courtesies. The adolescent Milena rebelled by taking cocaine and stealing flowers from cemeteries. Eventually the law caught up with her in Vienna where the

juvenile kleptomania of this doctor's daughter was attributed to her surviving aches. By the time Kafka died in June 1924, exactly one month short of his forty-first birthday, Milena had returned to Prague. She first adopted, then rejected Communism; with Hitler's sights fixed on Czechoslovakia, she became a patriot. In the face of Nazi censorship, Milena had guts to match her gall. She wrote: "Only one German soldier has to pass by a café for the glasses to shake and plaster to fall from the ceiling".

This was to be Milena's last hurrah before she was deported to Ravensbrück. Her camp number was 4714, but the inmates nicknamed her 4711, after the famous cologne. It was a hint of the old glamour before she died, at the age of 47, from a kidney infection. Today, Milena Jesenska's political journalism sheds invaluable light on central Europe before the war and communism. *Kafka, Love and Courage* is a moving tribute to a Czech heroine, and Mary Hockaday is to be congratulated.

Freeing the truth from a frozen grave

Robert Winder is moved by harrowing accounts of persecution and betrayal from the KGB files

The KGB's Literary Archive by Vitaly Shentalinsky
trans by John Crowfoot, Harvill £18

Nothing could be more inspired to subvert the idea that literature is merely a matter of pretty phrase-making than the written-in-blond work of the many writers persecuted by Stalin, and Vitaly Shentalinsky, in this historic labour of research, has rescued an amazing body of work from the grave. In the burst of fresh air provoked by *perestroika*, he scoured the KGB files on writers and found a treasure trove.

Quite apart from their biographical importance (he is able to document many mysterious deaths), he found Bulgakov's diary, the suppressed text of Mandelstam's satire on Stalin, and a mass of memoirs by lesser known names. In Stalin's camps, he writes, "words often remained the only saving draught of liberty".

He even organises the less skilful testimonies into a suggestive new category: illiterate literature. Here for instance is the notebook of a 20-year-old called Ivan Okuney, who in 1938 was sent to the icy Kolyma peninsula for having an out-of-date passport. One day Okuney and several others asked for sleeves (it was December) and were taken to a punishment cell and sprayed with a fire hose:

"They turned it on and pointed it at us. We ran from one corner to another but they kept it pointed at us... And that day it was minus 50 degrees and the chassis of an automobile cracked with the frost. They sprayed us for half an hour and then the water ran out. Four hours later Kuliev came and began to say that we should go back to the barrack but we had all frozen together and could not move. Then he called over the fireman who came with a small axe and began to cut us apart... Then they dragged me by my feet into the barrack and behind me rolled up the others. Tears laments the curses of the guards. In the morning the barrack orderly announced time to get up. I began to wake my wet accomplices but two were dead."

It is hard to imagine anything more appropriate to the experience (even in translation) than this numb, frozen vocabulary and stricken grammar. It might be that this is simply what we expect from Soviet literature -

real-life horror - but what makes it so telling is that it is just one out of hundreds of similar tales. Shentalinsky narrates the persecution of writers such as Isaac Babel, Nina Hagen-Torn Andrei Platonov, Osip Mandelstam, Pavel Florensky and Mikhail Bulgakov and they are all sad, sad stories, given extra piquancy by the flavourless tone of bureaucratic jargon in which their KGB case histories are cast.

While it is tempting to succumb to the myth of the writer as a kind of saintly truth teller in a harbours world, Shentalinsky refuses to indulge this platitudinous view of literature. In perhaps his most telling chapter, "Informing as a literary genre", he demonstrates that few writers were saints. Every writer unjustly incarcerated or shot was indicted by (who else?) another writer. In the race to inform on one another, speed was essential: a classic joke concerned the condemned man who rued his laziness after a chat with a fellow-writer: "I went to bed thinking, I'll inform on him tomorrow. Next morning they picked me up: he was quicker off the mark".

The files reveal that the KGB was intimately engaged with both little-known writers and the greatest names. Maxim Gorky, for instance, wrote enthusiastically about Stalin's purges in *Pravda*: "The enemy must be exterminated ruthlessly and without pity, paying no attention to the gasps and groans of the professional humanists" But this callous dogmatism availed him, as they say, nought. Shentalinsky finds in the KGB files evidence that Gorky's son was murdered by doctors who turned a dose of fly into a fatal illness by getting him drunk and leaving him out in the snow.

Shentalinsky makes a strong case for the heroic status of literature. But he does not want us to fall into the trap of believing that literature enjoys, as it were, the last word. His book is not a true chronicle of these dire years. It is just an account of bad deeds and bad people, aware always that the moving memoirs of the few articulate victims can only hint at the irretrievable agonies of the millions from whom we hear nothing.

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'We have had the chance to get to know each other as adults in a way I never knew my own parents'

What happens when grown-up children return to live with their parents? By Anne Spackman

Many parents may not be looking forward to their grown-up children returning for Christmas this year—not because they don't like them, but because they are already there. The phenomenon of the 20-something child coming back to live at home is becoming a feature of most prosperous neighbourhoods in large towns and cities. It is partly due to the rise in rents—up by as much as 10 per cent this year. But the underlying cause is the change in employment patterns, meaning longer periods of education and training, less job security, or, indeed, no job at all for many people in their twenties.

The National Child Development Study, which has followed a group of children from their birth in 1958 through to the present day, found that about one fifth of children return to live at home at least once. It also discovered that the numbers returning rose when unemployment rates increased.

The new trend mostly affects the urban middle class, whose houses are large enough to take two generations in reasonable comfort. In cities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and London, where good accommodation is expensive, families are turning their basements or top floors into semi-separate accommodation for their children. (Children are less likely to return home if their parents live in the country because the job prospects are poor and social isolation makes it less attractive.)

But how does it work out? How easy is it for parents to adapt to the idea that their house is also their child's house and that the child is now an adult? How easy is it for people in their twenties who are used to the freedom of student life?

The generation of affected parents grew up in the Sixties. Many said how much closer they were to their own children than they had ever been to their parents. Working mothers felt their children were aware of the demands on their time and accepted they had their own life to lead. They themselves had been able to buy large houses relatively cheaply. For their children the only option was shelling out hundreds of pounds a month for a grotty flat.

The biggest problem on both sides seems to be one of perceptions. A few parents expressed the worry that people would think they were mollycoddling their children, although they didn't fear that themselves. Some children were reluctant to advertise the fact that they were living at home—not because they disliked it, but because they felt that it was not the done thing.

Amanda Theunissen is a television producer, living in Bristol. She and her husband have been sharing their house in Clifton with their son Richard, who returned home at the age of 24 to train to be a lawyer. He lived on the top floor, but not in a self-contained flat. He has just moved to Cardiff to do his solicitor's articles.

"We've always been very close as a family," says Mrs Theunissen. "There was a brief period when my daughter was back at home, too. From my point of view it has been nothing but a bonus. We have all had the chance to get to know each other as

adults in a way I never knew my parents. Our ways of life are almost the same—we read the same books, we listen to the same music, we laugh at the same jokes. I like their friends. I get such pleasure from their company. It makes the house more interesting. It makes a great difference that this arrangement is by choice rather than imposition. It would be terrible if they thought they were stuck here forever."

Richard Theunissen adds: "The parent-child relationship has been transformed. I am no longer a child living in my parent's house; we are adults living together—though I'm conscious that it is still the parental home."

"I've never felt particularly restricted,

partly because of the size of the house and partly because my parents were so accommodating. By and large I have enjoyed it very much. Both my parents are, I think, people I would be interested in anyway."

"The only real drawback is a feeling that you see your contemporaries are establishing their own homes and you are not doing so yourself. There is a perceived pressure that it is peculiar not to have done that, even though I know a number of people who haven't."

Catherine Porteous is a trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. She and her husband live in the main part of the family home in Notting Hill, west London. Their son Tom, 35, who works abroad for much of the year, spends his time in London living in the flat downstairs with his wife Amira and son Younus. "We have something of a tradition of extended families,"

she says. "My parents lived in the flat downstairs when the children were small, so I hope I've learned from that experience. My mother was a model of discretion and my father was not. He used to come in at any time and borrow books and leave his cigarette ends all over the place."

"We are so lucky that we have a lovely daughter-in-law, who thinks the family is very important. When we are away for the weekend they can spread out into our house and have friends round for dinner. But they always clear up afterwards."

"For the grandparents and grandchildren it's absolute bliss. When Tom was at school and I was working he used to go and have tea with granma. It's lovely for me because I get to see my grandson all the time. But it all has to be worked at. It's important that they have their privacy, that they don't get bounced on all the time."

Tom Porteous is equally as satisfied: "I don't spend that much time in London, so when I do come back it's nice to have a flat which is usually empty and beneath my parents' house. It would be great to have a big flat somewhere central but it's not really affordable. If we needed to settle down in London I feel it would be right to get a bigger place. But it's very nice to be here."

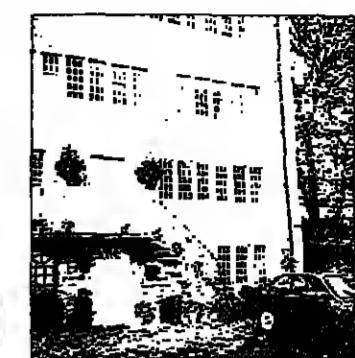
"It works for us. Our son gets to see his grandparents and his cousins. I remember when I was a child and my grandparents lived in this flat, going down to have supper with them. I think it's good for children to have a sense of family in that way."



Catherine Porteous and her 35-year-old son Tom, who lives in the flat below his parents' home

Photo: Tony Buckingham

Househunter
Golcar, West Yorkshire



If this former mill were overlooking a canal in a city it would cost £120,000 per floor. Instead it overlooks the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, currently the subject of a landscaping programme, and costs £120,000 for the whole four-storey building. It was converted into a home three years ago, with a vast open-plan room on the top floor, three bedrooms, a sitting room and a study. "Additional land to the side of the property needs your green fingers," says the agent. In The Sucks 101434 381404

For What It's Worth

It will surprise few people who have been through the experience of "having the builders in" to hear that half those working on domestic jobs have no relevant qualifications. This information comes in a report for the Joseph Rowntree Trust. With nearly half of privately owned homes more than 50 years old and 27 per cent more than 75 years old, the report stresses the need for high quality maintenance. Its authors suggest the introduction of a simple contract for small jobs, better vetting by trade organisations and the provision of more accessible training. However, they point out that one of the biggest problems is persuading customers not to employ builders who cut corners and avoid VAT in order to keep down costs.

An estate agent in Kent is introducing a scheme to try to break the vicious circle of shortages in the family house market in the Home Counties. There are currently too many buyers chasing too few houses in the £150,000 plus bracket. Caleutt Maclean in Ashford is drawing up a register of houses whose owners are in this position. The owners register with the agency, which releases a description of their home to other owners in a similar position. The house is not advertised on the open market. Caleutt Maclean (01233 812070)

Who's Moving

Mats Wilander is selling the home he owns but does not occupy in Eaton Terrace, Belgravia. It is currently rented out for £66,000 a year. The Swedish tennis star bought the house as an investment in 1989, but is now switching his money to New York. Egertons is asking £1.25m for the house.

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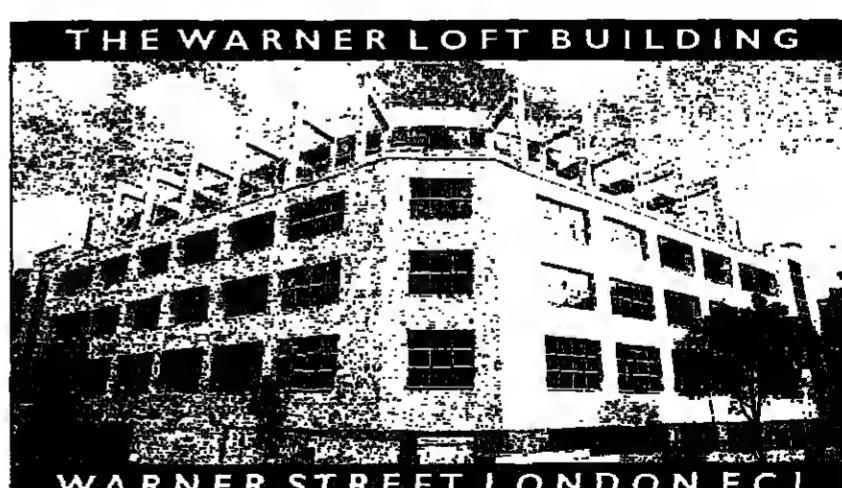
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travel scotland



The difference between hill-walking and mountaineering: ice

By Victoria Pybus

Ice and snow may be the curse of drivers, but for mountain climbers they call for a rush to the nearest summit to enjoy thrills and challenges in confrontation with the frozen elements. For anyone contemplating a vertical challenge, the prime peaks and ridges are those of Scotland, principally the Grampian and Cairngorm mountains, and to a lesser extent the Torridon region in the north-west.

Hill-walking is a summer pursuit, but hill-walking in winter is mountaineering. Winter courses for the inexperienced are essential. Their aim is to teach the basic skills, starting with navigation. After you have acquired compass proficiency you should try it in blizzard conditions, when direction-finding and timing become survival skills. Beginners should also practise such essentials as walking in crampons and using a rope.

The most popular climbing areas in Scotland are Glencoe (including the Skye ridge walk along Aonach Eagach on the north side) and Ben Nevis (Scotland's highest peak at 1344m), both on the western side of the country. The east is colder and drier than the west, whose coastal climate produces unique climbing conditions including white, sparkly, hoar frost which can be several centimetres deep. Torridon, though more northerly, is nearer the sea than Ben Nevis, and the Gulf Stream can ruin the wintry possibilities of its Mts Liathach and Eilean.

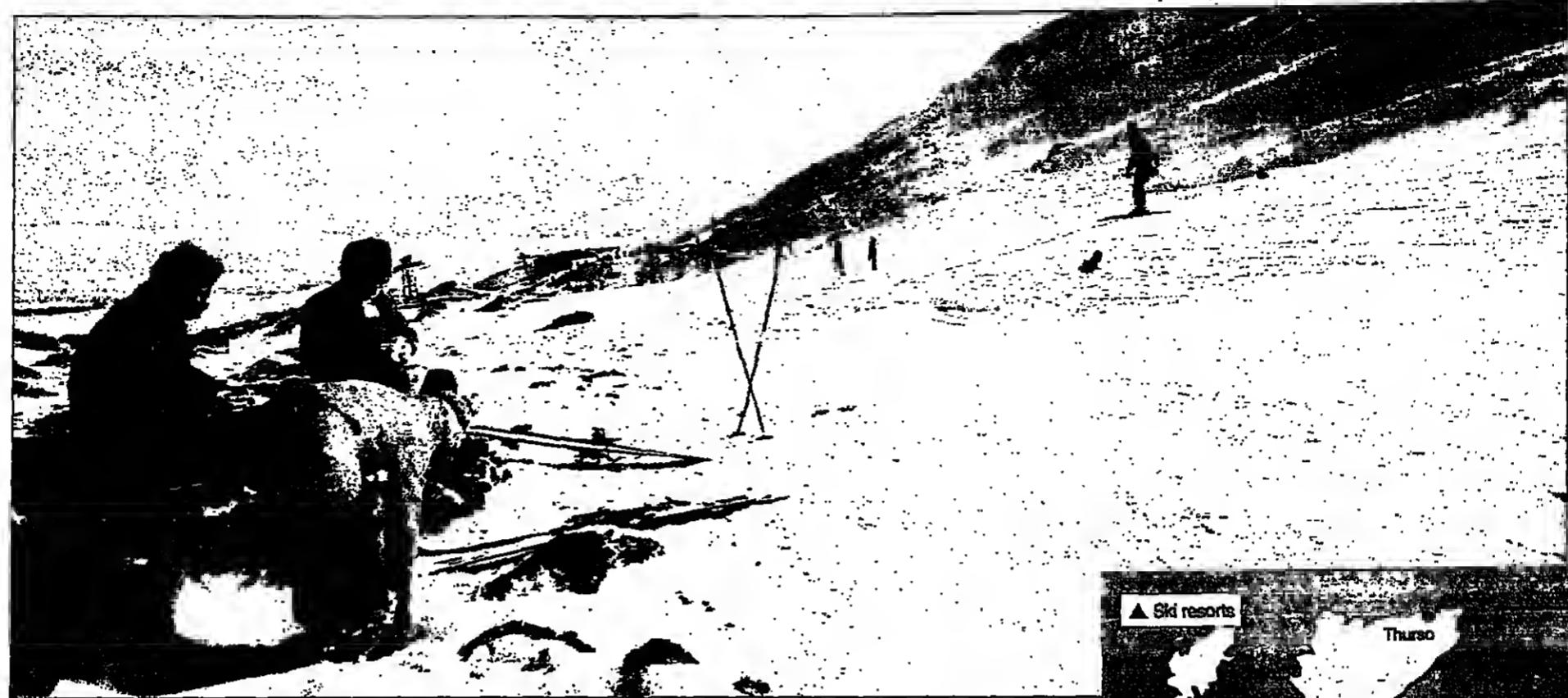
Ice in its many forms co-stars with snow in winter climbing. Most Scottish ice-climbing takes place in gullies where the snow has melted and frozen several times, forming a surface hard enough to grip on to with basic equipment. With newer and better equipment, climbing on ice-smeared faces and buttresses has become increasingly popular. It is even possible in a hard winter to climb on giant icicles, some of them 100m long, formed where water drips over the crags and precipices.

As any winter mountain enthusiast will tell you, part of the fascination of climbing is the way the climate produces constantly changing conditions, while the mountains themselves have so many facets and formations that you can never tire of them, which is reason enough to get your crampons on.

For further information, contact Kevin Howett, The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (01738 638227), based in Crieff, Perth. The MCS also organises one, two and three-day winter skills courses in January and February. For women enthusiasts the MSC can provide access to a networking group, Glencoe Lodge (01479 861276) in Aviemore runs summer and winter training courses for beginners up to the highest levels of expertise. Beginners' all-inclusive, five-day courses cost £216. Martin Moran Mountaineering (01520 722361) organises courses in the Torridon region. An all-inclusive five-day standard course costs £360.

Scotland has more lifts and more pistes than ever before. And in Glenshee there is even the prospect of snow

By John Arlidge



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HOW THE SCOTTISH SKI RESORTS MEASURE UP

Nevis Range

35 runs, 11 lifts. Around 90,000 skiers came here during the 1994/5 season and it is hoped that numbers will be up to 100,000 in 1995. This season the ski area has doubled in size and there are two additional lifts. Future plans include the construction of a new chairlift during the summer. Nearest town - Aviemore (10 miles). Snow reports: 01479 861261.

Cairngorm

32 runs, 17 lifts. The most popular of Scotland's ski resorts, with 211,000 skiers last season. For the moment, this figure more or less fits capacity so ski numbers are not expected to increase significantly - although the new snowboarding facilities should attract more people. Nearest town - Aviemore (10 miles). Snow reports: 01479 861261.

The Lecht

20 runs, 12 lifts. Improvements this year include a hi-tech snow-grooming machine, moving and flattening snow and grinding up ice. Last winter 45,000 people visited and there are hopes that numbers will be up 10 per cent this year, particularly since snowboarding has proved very popular here. Nearest town - Aviemore (30 miles). Snow reports: 01975 51440.

Glenshee

38 runs, 26 lifts. New this year, a snowboard academy. Late snowfall delayed the start of the season last year, so winter visitor numbers for 1994/95 were down to 129,000 as opposed to 180,000 the year before. More skiers and (especially) snowboarders are expected this year. Nearest town - Pitlochry. Snow reports: 01395 851226.

Glencoe

14 runs, 7 lifts. Now open every day and owned by the same company that manages Glenshee - one of the benefits being that joint ski passes with Glenshee are available. Last season, when the resort was open for just five days a week, 35,000 skiers came here. Many more are expected in 1995/6. Nearest town - Fort William. Snow reports: 01855 851226.



Scotland's skiing industry, which has traditionally been hampered by low investment, a poor image and the vagaries of Scottish weather, looks set to grow this year. All five resorts north of the border - Cairngorm, the Lecht, Nevis Range, Glencoe and Glenshee - have invested more than £2m in new lifts, extra miles of piste and better après-ski for both skiers and snowboarders. Tour operators hope that the new developments, coupled with rising prices on the Continent, will tempt up to one third of Britain's two million skiers to take to the hills at home.

The biggest expansion is at the Nevis Range, near Fort William, where the climber Alison Hargreaves, who died in August, skied regularly. Two new lifts have been built there and the ski area has increased from 300 to 600 hectares. There are now 11 lifts serving 35 runs around the 4,000ft Aonach

Mor. On-piste catering has also improved with the addition of the Rob Roy T-Bar (the Hollywood kilt movie, *Rob Roy*, was filmed in nearby Glen Nevis). Snowboarding has become big business over the past year, and the resorts now offer instruction as well as board hire. In Glencoe (also in the Nevis range of mountains) the new academy offering snowboarding classes is just one of a series of developments which include a new beginners' lift and two snow grooming machines. Glencoe has seven lifts serving 16 runs, including the longest vertical descent in Scotland - 2,600ft. Skiers can buy one pass which covers both Glencoe and one of Scotland's eastern resorts - Glenshee in Royal Deeside (which the Glencoe Chairlift Company has recently acquired). There, 26 lifts serve 38 runs including the longest in Scotland at 1,25 miles.

Also in the east is Scotland's most popular resort: Cairn-

gorm, near Aviemore, which last year attracted 211,000 visitors. It boasts nearly 30 miles of downhill runs on 32 pistes. The Cairngorm Chairlift Company, which runs the resort, is hoping to win approval for a mountain railway - the first modern funicular to be built in the UK - to speed skiers to the slopes. At the nearby Lecht, existing pistes have been upgraded and the ski school expanded. Snowboarding has been introduced on the 20 runs.

In the past, skiers (almost half of whom come from south of the border or northern Ireland) have criticised the fragmented information and booking services for weekend and longer breaks. This year the Scottish Tourist Board has introduced a single telephone booking line through AT Mays in Aberdeen. Skiers and snowboarders can book all accommodation, equipment and lift passes through Ski Scotland Reservations.

Operators are also developing alternative Highland games, notably archery, falconry and off-road driving, to cater for non-skiers. At the same time, cross-country or Nordic skiing has been introduced in more areas than ever before. Taken together, operators say, these changes will ensure that the number of skiers this year reaches the 1987 peak of 665,000. Calum Fleming, a manager at the Nevis Range, said: "During the 1980s visitor numbers were very high but then the recession started and the figures dropped. In recent years we have been seeing increases again. With all the new developments - and with, hopefully, a good snow winter - we could hit 100,000." Ms Fleming insists that the latest investments will help scotch the myth that resorts north of the border offer poor value for money. "Skiing in Scotland has been transformed in recent years. It was true that as recently as five

years ago, many resorts offered only average facilities and equipment. Capacity was low and there were queues and overcrowding. Everything was rather outdated. But competition between all the five resorts, coupled with the fact that many skiers who come to Scotland expect the high standards they have already experienced in the US and the Continent, has helped force up the quality."

Although resort operators have tackled the problem of under-investment, Scotland's other problem, the weather, remains. Glenshee is the only Scottish resort with a snow-making machine, as well as grooming. The relative humidity of the resorts nearer the west coast is too high to make man-made snow production feasible. Meanwhile, poor snow falls mean there have been just a handful of skiing days this year. Tour companies are now hoping for a repeat of 1994 when because of plunging spring tem-

peratures, skiers were still on the slopes of Aonach Mor (Nevis Range) on May Day.

At the moment there is not enough snow in Scotland for the skiing season to start. Overnight snowfalls have provided only light and insufficient coverings - frustrated skiers should head for the 200m dry ski slope at The Lecht. The five resorts are hoping that the season will begin at least by 1 January, the date on which skiing started last season. Ski Scotland Reservations (covering all five resorts) is on 01224 590 000. For snow reports call Ski Hotline Scotland 0891 654 654 and Ski Call Scotland 0891 700 777. The Ski Scotland brochure is available from the Scottish Tourist Board 0345 511 511. Five day packages, including bed and breakfast, equipment hire and ski passes, start at £155.

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A ride on the world's fastest funicular

Snow's up
By Chris Gill

It's test time again, so pay attention. Where is the world's fastest funicular railway? Zermatt? Val d'Isère? No; I'll give you a clue: it's in the same ski area as Austria's highest cable car. I can see the puzzled look on your face. Has St Anton suddenly speeded up its dear old Kan-dahar-bahn? Has Solden acquired a state-of-the-art funicular? Could it be Kaprun's Kitzsteinhorn? No, no and no. The answer, as many racers who train there could tell you, is the Pitztal glacier.

You may have heard of the Tux and Stubai glaciers, as well as the Kitzsteinhorn. But most British skiers have not heard of the Pitztal.

This may be partly because of the area's confused identity. There is no large, easily identified resort in the valley of the Pitz; instead, there is accommodation in a series of small villages, many of which



Snow depths at Pitztal in Austria are most impressive: 190cm at top and bottom of the area

Photograph: Impact
even the best-covered non-glacier resorts. In due course fresh snowfalls will cover those blue patches for the winter. And the snow should then last; the low point of the skiing is at 2750m - slightly higher, for example, than La Sialire, between Méribel and Courchevel.

But never mind. Hitting a patch of ice at speed is a lot less damaging than hitting the tip of a submerged boulder, and at present there is still a real danger of that in

comfortably beaten by the Hintertux glacier area and less comfortably by the Stubai one. But it offers a good range of runs, including testing reds and a couple of short stretches that deserve their black grading. If you're looking for somewhere to polish your technique with the aid of good snow, include it on your shortlist.

Unless, that is, you're fussed about queues or evening action. The aforementioned funicular (which, incidentally, I don't believe to be as fast as the more modern French lifts) is the only way up, and for most people the only way down to the valley (descents on skis require good snow and guidance). Taking 200 people a time and running at the most every 10 minutes, it generates queues; on a fine spring afternoon, they must be serious.

The high-point of the area, reached by a multi-cabin cable-car, gives long and spectacular 360 degree views, and on the occasion of my visit (on Monday) gave a view of what seemed to be some approaching weather. But that's another story.

Snow conditions

It has been a mainly snowless week in the Alps, which is the last thing the skiing business wanted: snow is needed practically everywhere. On Thursday afternoon in the Chamonix Valley the only skiing was a single piste in Les Houches; at least one

major British tour operator is switching this weekend's arriving skiers to Courmayeur, where there is excellent artificial snow on most pistes.

At the opposite end of the Alps, in the Dolomites, Selva's snow-making installation is paying similar dividends. On Tuesday I had excellent skiing on two long red runs to the village, and the course for today's World Cup downhill looks in fine fettle.

There has been a little snow in some Swiss and Austrian resorts this week, but when I arrive in Val d'Isère/Tignes tonight I expect to find the skiing there still confined to the glacier and artificial snow.

at a welcome
LAST RESORT

ver before
snow

NOT FOR IT EXPOSURE

Photograph: Andy Bennetts

Thurso in winter has the best surfing in Europe. Just don't forget your drysuit. By Simon Calder

Hawaii. Bondi. Thurso. The last is the odd one out, and not just because it fails to end in an "i". Thurso is a little easier to reach from most places in Britain; it has a more inspiring coastline and, in the lengthening nights as the year extends towards its dark conclusion, several dozen fewer degrees of warmth. But in terms of surfing, there is not much to choose between them.

From the south, you approach mainland Britain's northernmost town across petrified lowlands: murky, scrubby patches of freeze-dried earth, with all the goodness concentrated into the odd, optimistic patch of cultivation. Many of Thurso's 8,000 souls reside in the uneasily uniform housing that bears in the huddle of gaunt municipal granite at the heart of the town. Near the sea, however, manmade structures shrink back from the power of the ocean.

If you were to let the tide sweep you out due north from here you would meet first the polar ice cap and second Siberia. The anvil-flat north coast of Scotland, extending horizontally from John O'Groats to Cape Wrath, is exposed to everything the Arctic can hurl at it.

The bruised and battered shoreline should be the perfect place to experience stormy solitude – but it isn't. At Crosskirk, five miles west of Thurso, the ruins of a chapel and a lonely cemetery look out over blackened rocks. So, too, do the darting eyes of a vanload or two

of surfers. A trio of them have come from Edinburgh, 300 miles south; a more adventurous couple have traversed the globe and are diametrically opposite their home in the South Island of New Zealand. Shivering with each Arctic bluster, they gauge the potential risks and rewards of paddling offshore to try to catch the ultimate wave.

You would not want to learn the craft hereabouts. To figure out how to stand up on a seven-foot piece of moulded polyurethane foam in rough water, go elsewhere; the British Surfing Association's advice for this whole stretch of coast warns "Experienced surfers only". But once you have cracked the patience-exhausting business of getting yourself and your surfboard on to a breaker, and felt the thrill of harnessing all that latent energy, sooner or later you will feel the tug of Europe's best surf.

Low-pressure areas and storms in the Pentland Firth, between the mainland and Orkney, make for some of the heaviest seas in the world. Many of the graves in the cemetery belong to seamen who perished on the rocky North Shore, but the same brute force of water attracts tourists by the Transload. A flash of fibre-glass erupts from the sea and creates a miraculously vortex as it accelerates for a high-velocity ride along the crest of a devilish wave. This is Surfer's Paradise, UK. As the drysuits figure bobbed about in the adrenaline afterglow, having just

descended from a height of 10 feet or more above the surrounding water, I realised that surfing must be the one sport where understatement, not exaggeration, prevails.

The surfer needs to know the water as intently as do the fishermen setting out from the small port of Scrabster, around the bay from Thurso. A crucial distinction is between waves whipped up by northern gales, and the swell generated from within the brooding sea. A "plasy" surface, undistorted by the wind, is ideal; but with Iceland and Norway being closer neighbours than London, the shrewd surfer realises the risks of sudden changes of conditions.

If you are not attracted by the idea of tackling the elements head-on, then discovering Britain's finest beaches may appeal. The square chin of a shoreline that juts out from Scotland turns out to be pockmarked by crescent-shaped bays. Many of these do not possess the appropriate ground profile to create great surf, so they remain blissfully empty through the winter – and, say the locals, most of the summer, too.

Unlike other seas at this latitude, the North Atlantic drift means the water never freezes. That explains why the dead-end fishing port of Reay boasts a harbour that looks a sight more sturdy than any of the frail cottages around it, and beyond it a sheer of sands that warm with every darkening degree of the sinking afternoon sun. The hit on

the grey horizon that welds itself to the steely waters is white, and obvious: Dounreay nuclear power station was located here to take advantage of the isolation, but the huge blank globe in which the isotopes regenerate comprises a far uglier manifestation of energy than the pure potential of the sea – a mid-century dream of the future that for some, has become a nightmare of the present. Northern Scotland is littered with evidence of men overestimating their own powers and underestimating nature.

Back through the gloom to Thurso, in search of après-surf. The digital component of *Hawaii Five-O* signifies it was the 50th state to become United. At Thurso, Five-O is more likely to be the score by which the local team lose against Buckie Thistle. The only kind of surf culture you're likely to find here emanates from one of the baronial halls that administered to a united serif-dom, and the closest most visiting surfers come to a wipe-out is a heavy night at the bar of the Central Hotel.

The local surfing community, for whom the waves represent a better chance of sporting success than does playing for Wick Academy FC, meet the visitors to discuss the foibles of the sea, to talk of faraway shores. Sea, sand, surf and sun – Thurso cannot claim a full house, but at this wildest part of Britain that hardly seems to matter. The word that really counts is "extreme".

When to go

The surf is at its best in the last three months of the year. Non surfers might enjoy the area more in midsummer.

How to get there

Simon Calder paid £235 for a return ticket on British Airways (0345 222111) from Heathrow via Edinburgh to Wick, and rented a car from Richards Garage (01985 604123) in Wick for £45 per day. An alternative is to travel by rail via Inverness to Thurso, but public transport along the coast is limited.

Where to stay

Options are limited. Simon Calder paid £25 per night for bed and breakfast at the Royal Hotel, Traill Street, Thurso (01847 893191). A double room costs £30.

Who to ask

Cairnness Tourist Board, Whitechapel Road, Wick KW1 4EA. The British Surfing Association is based at Champions Yard, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2SS (01736 60250).

SCOTTISH DEPARTURES

If you have not travelled by coach for some time, you may have the impression that National Express buses (0990 808080) between Scotland and England are cheap but slow. Cheap they definitely are, with a no-restrictions ticket from main cities in southern Scotland to London for only £25 return. Slow they are not, with the fastest journey under eight hours.

Rail Direct (0800 450450) is selling Apex tickets between Glasgow and London on either the East Coast or West Coast main lines for £46 return if you book a week in advance. The centre-to-centre trip is slightly faster along the East Coast from King's Cross via Edinburgh, but more scenic from Euston.

No flights will operate between Scotland and England on Christmas Day, and some services will be cut for the last week in December and the first week of January. British Airways (0345 222111) will be reducing Super Shuttle services linking Heathrow with Glasgow and Edinburgh. The last northbound flight on Christmas Eve is at 5pm to Edinburgh and 6.15pm to Glasgow. Southbound, the latest services are at 7pm from Edinburgh and 7.15pm from Glasgow. Air UK (0345 6657777) is rearranging its schedules from Scotland's two biggest cities to Stansted, cutting some services but adding others between 23 and 29 December.

ski clinics are scheduled every weekend for a month from 10 February at Cairngorm. For £130, you get two days of skiing, accommodation and full board, plus the chance to watch all your mistakes on video. The courses are organised by John Arnold Skiing of Edinburgh (0131 555 2182).



For anyone with an aversion to prolonged daylight, winter mountaineering courses in Scotland are organised by Himalayan Kingdoms (0114-276 3322). The company runs trips to other non-Himalayan places, such as North America's highest mountain Denali (formerly Mount McKinley) in the state of Alaska. It is one of the most dangerous peaks in the world because of the low temperatures and often severe weather. Participants in the expedition organised next May can expect constant daylight. The cost of the ascent to 20,321 feet is £2,750.

What a welcome! A little town, whose grey houses keep their backs to the sea



LAST RESORT

Stranraer

By Simon Calder

When you round the Hammerhead Peninsula on the approach from Belfast, Stranraer greets you with barely a murmur. Cosy in the shelter of Loch Ryan, the town huddles beneath low hills. Stranraer is at the end of the A77, the road to almost nowhere, and is all the finer for its isolation.

As you approach the quayside, not a single surprise greets you: the awkward concrete ugliness of the jetties lead the eye up to austere grey houses and shops that keep their backs to the sea. Trucks arriving from Larne and motorists from Belfast are diverted around the town, and miss out on its modest attractions.

The chief civic asset is the Castle of St John, possibly the smallest you will ever see. It is more like a turreted rising molar-like from the middle of Stranraer, but like the rings of

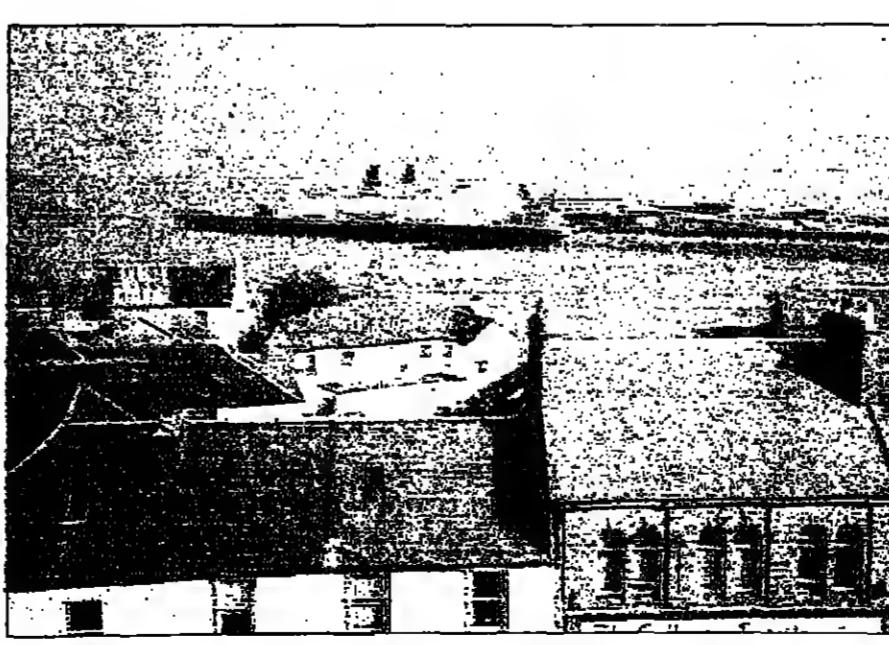
a tree its layers tell the history of the port. The ferry business began only in 1872; for centuries before that, agriculture was the way to scrape a living here. Cattle were raised on the hillsides around Stranraer, then driven hundreds of miles south to the market in Norwich.

The Adairs of Kinhilt, the local squires, built the first couple of the castle's storeys in 1510 to make their mark on the town. A century later, it was requisitioned and enlarged by government troops, in order to subdue the early radical movement known as the Covenanters. Finally, the council took control and turned it into the local jail, building a couple more floors and topping it out with a tiny exercise yard. There was barely room to do much more than carve your initials in the ruddy sandstone, as one convict with the unfortunate

name of Prisoner Walls did in 1850.

From the top you can survey the Royal Burgh and plan a tour around its modest monuments, perhaps ending up at the George Hotel for lunch. Thistle, shamrock and rose emblems welcome those from Scotland, Ireland and England; the Welsh leek has apparently been sprung.

If you wander down to the seafront to watch the ferries drift back and forth from Ireland, you will probably find yourself on the scrubby patch of grass known as Agnew Park. The only structure of interest is the memorial to those who died when the ferry *Princess Victoria* sank in the year Elizabeth II was crowned. But as the town celebrates 400 years of being a Royal Burgh, these five acres of scrubland are the beneficiary of £546,980 of Millennium money (the Wigton



Free Press and Stranraer Advertiser is quite specific about the amount). In *Whisky Galore*, the source of the sudden municipal windfall was alcohol; in 1995, the origin is gambling, with the National Lottery contributing. With another £750,000 or so of council funds, the seafront is to be rejuvenated with a boat-

ing lake, miniature railway and café. A commendable civic project, creating a brighter welcome to the tiny proportion of foreign visitors who reach these shores by the northerly route. Now all we have to do is clean up the devastating unattractiveness of the Heathrow area, knock down Dover Harbour and start again, and tidy up the squalor that greets Eurostar passengers as soon as they emerge from Waterloo station.

The Millennium has come to Stranraer – but will anyone come to Britain if we have the poverty of imagination to restrict our restructuring to such minimalism?

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Hitchcock would have killed for such an atmosphere. The only life we saw was feral cats — chilling or what?

Robert Richardson has the place to himself in Nova Scotia

Talking to people in the weeks before we left, I began to feel we were about to take a holiday in *Terra Incognita*. Everyone knew Canada, but Nova Scotia appeared as familiar as downtown Whitehaven. And the figures prove it: out of more than a million recorded tourists to the province in 1994, a mere 7,500 flew in from the UK.

Clipped like a giant number seven on the edge of New Brunswick, with Cape Breton island sprawling to the northeast, Nova Scotia is well worth discovering. It's spacious — some 900,000 people in a land mass half the size of England — jewelled by silver and cobalt lakes, drenched with trees and edged by a wooded coastline. Halifax, its clean, compact capital (now boasting a casino) has the world's second largest natural harbour. No river flows into it, but the Atlantic surges in between two peninsulas that pinch it to the width of a short ferry crossing. It is fascinating by day, magnificent by night.

We took a two-hour harbour trip, good value at \$16 each, but dodge the tourist trap shop by the landing stage; you can get things more cheaply within a short walk. The boat first takes you near the scene of The Disaster, on which you can buy a whole book but an outline will suffice.

In December 1917, the *Mont Blanc*, a French munitions ship, collided with a Norwegian vessel in The Narrows and 2,500 tons of high explosives erupted into death and statistics in the biggest man-made explosion before Las Alamos. The *Mont Blanc*'s five-ton anchor landed two and a half miles away, a square mile of Halifax was obliterated, more than 2,000 people died, 1,600 buildings were destroyed and 12,000 damaged, and church bells all over the province were set clanging by a blast that hurtled a 12,000ft column of water and smoke into the air. Hours later, the captain of a ship 60 miles out in the Atlantic thought he'd struck a

mine when the tidal wave reached them.

History and prosperity now line the waterfront. The city that was rebuilt immediately after the explosion is preserved in what are called the Historic Properties, handsome older buildings visible between well-proportioned modern office blocks.

We regarded one of the two great suspension bridges spanning the harbour with caution. It was cursed by the local Mi'kmaq Indian chief who his daughter used it to meet her English soldier lover on the other side. It would fall three times, it threatened, once in storm, once in silence and once in death. A storm duly wrecked the first bridge and its replacement silently and inexplicably collapsed in the night; when they opened the third version, they proudly asked the chief's descendant to lift the curse.

Travelling out of Halifax you are almost overwhelmed by trees. There are more trees in Nova Scotia than you can shake a stick

at, but, unlike Old Scotland, you are not endlessly confronted by conifers. Red and sugar maple, birch, aspen, ash and hornbeam are among the hardwoods mixed with spruce, pine, hemlock, balsam fir and cedar, that cloak the hills and mountains. What appears to be the occasional brick house is only a decoration over the standard clapboard or shingle wooden structure, painted in soft greens, blues and whites, all impeccably clean. With so few people and so much land, everyone has large gardens, although frequently vicious winters and comparatively short growing seasons restrict the choice of shrubs and perennials.

The spot everyone has to see is Peggy's Cove, 25 miles west of Halifax. It was shrouded in sea mist the day we went, romantic and faintly eerie, but there was not much of a view.

On the map, there appears to be an endless chain of villages running alongside the sea; in fact they don't even class as hamlets, just handfuls of houses that

have been given a name. Baywater, where we enjoyed a splendid barbecue, bears no resemblance whatever to its oisome London counterpart.

You collect more mental snapshots than can be photographed. South of Peggy's Cove, The Ovens are well worth a visit. These dramatic caves are carved deep into dark shale rocks which you can view from the sea in what appears from the safety of land to be a very small boat. Stop on the way at Lunenburg, with its bright houses and glittering air. Wolfville, near the west coast, is an elegant university town, a good base from which to explore the coastline around the Bay of Fundy. Here the world's highest tides rise and fall more than 40 feet as 3,000 miles of Atlantic muscle force water into the narrowing Minas Basin.

Best of all, we thought, was a place the brochures don't mention. Fisherman's Reserve is near Halifax, a few miles along the coast road west of Dartmouth. It's not marked on the maps, but

watch for the sign down to a lonely group of silent, decaying wooden huts and an atmosphere Hitchcock would have killed for. The only life we saw was feral cats, chilling or what?

Grand Pré, near Wolfville, is a must for visitors. Here there is a national history park and memorial to the Acadian French who were ruthlessly driven out by the English during the colonial struggle for Canada. Their expulsion led to the legend of Evangeline, whose husband Gabriel was among the menfolk ordered out on the day they married. She spent the rest of her life wandering in search of him until (this is legend, after all) she finally found him years later on his deathbed and promptly died.

For the moment you'll find you have the place more or less to yourself. But the trick may be to get to Nova Scotia before everyone else does, book now for a late spring or summer visit as the province is poised to sell itself to the Brits.

When to go
Nova Scotia is at its best between May and September. Book now for spring and summer holidays

How to get there
The only airline with regular services between the UK and Nova Scotia is Air Canada (0900 247226), which operates five flights each week between Heathrow and Halifax. The fares are relatively high given the short distance, and are currently around £350 including tax.

How to get around
Public transport is poor, with only one train or a couple of buses linking the main towns and cities. Most visitors end up hiring a car, which can be done in advance with the leading multinational car rental companies.

Who to ask
Visit Canada Centre, 62-65 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DY (0181-875 1523).



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The whites have had it. Better these days to be a red, a blue, a bronze or a black

Jenny McClean visits a rare turkey farm



Main photo: blue turkeys at the Domestic Fowl Trust. Far left: Michael Roberts with a group of pied and blue turkeys. Photos: John Lawrence

Take a tip: if you have to come back as a domestic fowl, come back as a turkey. A handsome buff perhaps or possibly a blue. Or even an exotic looking crimson down. But not a bronze or black, and definitely not a white. You will see why in a minute.

Not that there is anything wrong with your common or garden white. After all, unlike most chickens, a turkey of whatever persuasion is spared a bleak battery existence. But the lifestyle of the white does reveal one big drawback: most of them get eaten at Christmas.

One reason is that white turkeys are broad-breasted and meaty, the hens weighing 14-16lbs and the males, or stags, anything up to an oven-crushing 40lbs. Buffs and crimson daws, along with blues, lavenders and Nebraskans, to name a few, are long-breasted, skinnier and therefore less commercial. How can you provide turkey sandwiches into the New Year with something that tips the scales at a mere 10-16lbs?

But the main reason for the proliferation, up to now, of white turkeys at the expense of more colourful souls is cosmetic. A few white feathers left on the carcass after plucking hardly show, and are therefore less likely to upset that peacocky scapsgoat, *The Housewife*.

"Not many people know you can get red and blue turkeys, but public awareness is growing," says Michael Roberts, founder and owner of the Domestic Fowl Trust near Evesham in Worcestershire. "There is a terrific trend now towards bronze turkeys and, to a lesser extent, black, which are harder to find."

Why? Do they taste different? Not according to Mr Roberts who keeps up to half the 13 recognised turkey types (which are all descended from the Mexican wild turkey) among his 160 minority breeds of fowl. He thinks the vogue

towards tinted turkeys is linked more to the birds' visual appeal, even though those dining off it will be unaware of its plumage.

"Some people claim they can detect a difference in taste between white and the various coloured turkeys but I'm sceptical," says Michael Roberts. "The different parts of a bird, such as the breast and legs, have their own flavours anyway. Difference in taste between birds is much more down to how they have been reared and cooked." Not surprisingly he finds free-range turkeys the most delicious, whatever their hue, and believes battery farming could be banned without detriment to the industry.

According to Mr Roberts, who founded the trust 20 years ago to save the old, pure breeds of chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese, more and more people are after bronze and black turkeys for the Christmas table. Pied, lavender and black-wing breeds are unlikely to be bred for food. "They mainly go to farm parks. Or privately, turkeys make great pets; they don't need a much bigger area than chickens and are less noisy than peacocks."

What about their alleged gobbling sound? "Yes, they do gobble, at least the males do. The females have a wider vocabulary. Altogether turkeys have the most noticeable range of all the domestic fowl, although I have had some that are very quiet indeed."

Because of the noise, and their flock instincts, turkeys also make good house guards. But foxes still manage to get at them, mauving them in situ because they are too heavy to be carted off. A light female might be able to fly away but a hefty male cannot even get off the ground. Sometimes the daft birds will come down off their perch to inspect the fox.

"They have a strong mischievous streak and can be infuriating but they make very good

mothers because they will sit," Mr Roberts says. They are prolific layers, producing 100 eggs or more in their first year. Unlike chickens' eggs they are all the same colour - white with brown flecks. They are also harder shelled, larger and more pointed. Unwanted male chicks are killed at a day old for owl and hawk food. Unwanted male adults are eaten by the trust's six staff.

Perversely, while black turkeys are sought after he finds black chickens impossible to sell in Britain. "Everyone wants brown or speckled, and something that lays brown eggs. Black hens tend to lay white eggs. On the Continent and in America, on the other hand, they think brown eggs are dirty, so you'll find that most black hens are of Mediterranean origin."

The Domestic Fowl Trust is a muddy place, requiring the wearing of wellies in all conditions short of drought. The birds are kept in low wire-fenced pens and while many of their breeds of poultry do not wander if well-fed, some are not averse to visiting each other, a social event I witnessed and which was signalled by pandemonium breaking out.

Michael Roberts has been fond of fowl since childhood. "Silkies, from China, were my favourite," he says. "Marco Polo, the first European to see them, described them as the only chickens he had ever seen with wool on their backs. I came to turkeys later and now I have rather got a soft spot for them."

He plans to include turkeys on his visits to Russia where he acts as adviser to the St Petersburg Poultry Club, an organisation he helped set up last year (1994) to restock the country with the breeds of domestic fowl that had been dismissed as non-commercial by the collective farms. Although he has exported chicken eggs to collectors in Japan, Africa, America, Canada and Scandinavia, turkeys are less popular abroad than

they are here. "The further east you go the less you see them. In Poland, for instance, they are much more used to eating geese."

The trust could be a registered charity but has opted for independence. Income is generated mainly by the sale of eight commercial breeds, although of the total 20,000 eggs, chicks and adult fowl he sold last year, over a third were rare breeds and interest is growing.

"Bantams and miniature breeds are always in demand," he says. "It's surprising how many we sell to Londoners. But recently we have had a lot of people who have moved into the country and found themselves with a large garden or orchard that they want to fill with larger fowl. Our other main group of customers is the old country set who have always kept a certain breed."

"We grill new customers fairly well so that they get the birds that are best for them and know how to look after them. The main questions are, 'How many eggs do you want?' and 'How fox-proof are you?' But it is quite possible to keep, say, four turkeys in a garden shed with straw and a good sized perch."

If you buy eggs or chicks now you can grow your own Christmas lunch for '96. But for those still in need of a bird now, a better bet is the Traditional Farm Fresh Turkey Association, a marketing organisation for 35 producers supplying turkeys reared to a strict code.

"We don't supply supermarkets," explained a spokeswoman, "only independent butchers. Our birds are free-range and although we don't claim they are organic, many of them are."

You can tell an association bird by the gold triangle it sports, indicating that it has been dry-plucked and hung. The more commonly wet-plucked birds cannot be hung because their keeping quality is reduced. And hung birds, claims the association, taste better.

The association can supply a list of producers, a recipe leaflet and a copy of their code, but the simplest thing is to phone a few butchers. Another useful source of festive food information is the Soil Association's organic Christmas list featuring turkeys, among other goodies.

Not necessarily organic or free-range, the Farm Retail Association's "Harvest Times" booklet is a useful guide, not just to turkey suppliers but to farm shops generally.

And what will Trust staff be eating at their Christmas office lunch? "A pied turkey and a Muscovy drake. They taste very nice and I've got too many of them floating around."

The Domestic Fowl Trust, Honeybourne Pastures, Honeybourne, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 833083.

Starting from scratch: turkey chicks cost £2-£4, poulets (aged 4-12 weeks) cost £3-£5. Feed and bedding for four turkeys will cost you about £60 a year. Buy the young June-August to fatten for Christmas.

The Poultry Club of Great Britain (01205 724081) advises its members on care and conservation and has details of local shows.

The Traditional Farm Fresh Turkeys Association (01323 899802).

The Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB (0117 929 0661). For its Organic Christmas List send £2.50+50p p&p.

Write to The Farm Retail Association, PO Box 200, Winchester SO23 8XJ for a directory of good farm shops selling meat.



Searching for Stanley Baxter: how could one of Britain's funniest men just disappear? Cole Moreton hunts a master of disguise

Finding the very best Christmas cake in the world: Michael Bateman on absolutely the ultimate in seasonal indulgences

Plus: Helen Fielding goes Colombian, and John Carlin goes to Costa Rica

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Should tax payers shell out to foster an increase in birds that are no longer threatened?

For most people, a wild goose chase is a futile quest; but on the Hebridean island of Tiree a real pursuit is about to start, as crofters and farmers driven to distraction by the number of geese feeding on their fields in winter, appoint a Goose Officer to shoot some of the ever-increasing population of greylag geese.

In the first half of this century the greylag was only an occasional visitor to Tiree. Then in the 1970s the birds began to nest on the island in substantial numbers. Now there are between 800 and 1,000 of them resident in summer, and in winter their numbers are swollen to 1,500 or so by migrants from the far north.

Over the past few years they have done such damage to crops that local people formed a management committee, with advisors from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the aim being to maintain a sustainable population by culling some birds in winter, and scaring off some of the others in summer.

To me, this is an entirely sensible plan: the greylag is a quarry species, and there is no reason why a moderate number should not be shot, provided the cull is done expertly. Meanwhile, however, on the larger island of Islay, to the south of Tiree, a crisis is building up simply because no culling can be done.

There the dominant geese are the Greenland Barnacle and the Greenland Whitefront, both fully protected in Scotland. The Islay migrants represent between a half and two-thirds of the world population of the two sub-species, which at one stage were considered to have become endangered.

Both species nest in the Arctic

losses they are suffering. The 4,000-acre RSPB reserve at Gruinard, in the north-west of the island, relieves pressure to some extent, but the huge flocks, 500 or even 1,000 strong, often prefer to feed elsewhere – especially on the lush pastures of Craigness Farm, next door, where the tenant, Tony Archibald, has to manage his excellent dairy herd "round the geese".

Almost everybody has had to cut down substantially on numbers of sheep and cattle, such as the grazing competition. Farmers now find it impossible to plant cereal crops in autumn, since the emerging shoots are immediately eaten off and killed.

Not only is it only farmers who are worried, Mr Lilley himself acknowledges that "there is concern all round, not least in Scottish Natural Heritage". One fear is that sheer overcrowding, and the pollution of the fields by droppings, will bring on some form of epidemic. Desperate remedies are being mentioned – for instance that people should be sent to the Arctic breeding grounds to prick thousands of eggs, so that they never hatch.

Can it make sense that taxpayers should shell out nearly half a million pounds a year to foster the increase in numbers of birds which are no longer threatened? The Islay farmers are in little doubt that this is conservation gone mad – and nobody can say what will happen next spring, when the current agreement with Scottish Natural Heritage is due to end.

Scottish Natural Heritage has hinted that the rate of compensation must be brought down; the island's farmers insist that it must go up. There is every indication that, come April, something will have to give.

A little local trouble A weekly round-up of rural rumpuses

Yorkshire Dales National Park has withdrawn its support for a 200-mile bridle and cycleway across the Pennines. Park authorities say that the Countryside Commission has gone back on assurances that the bridleway's route through the Dales would be negotiated with them. They say the Commission is now refusing to negotiate changes to the route, and have ceased work on their part of the route in retaliation. The Park believes that the trail could use existing rights of way rather than spending £1m on a new route between Settle and Mallerstang. Without National Park support there will be a 25-mile gap in the bridleway's 200-mile route between Matlock and Kirkby Stephen.

The only oyster farm in Wales is to close. Carew Oyster Farm in Pembrokeshire was set up 16 years ago by Joe Folder and his wife, June. Mr Folder, 56, blames the closure on fewer people eating oysters and not enough government subsidies. "We've been having a very difficult time for a number of years. We cannot produce at the same cost as our subsidised neighbours." He said oyster farming was flourishing in Ireland, helped along by subsidies which in Britain were virtually nil. Last month's Budget, which stopped a number of grants previously available, was the last straw. Mr Folder hopes to develop the couple's naturalist camp site nearby instead.

road test

Volkswagen
Sharan 20G

Let's get the name out of the way first. Even VW has come close to saying it is a mistake. I don't agree. Once I had overcome the moniker's initial strangeness, I found myself warming to this heist, precisely because it had a friendly name. You may like or admire your 325 or Mondeo, but it's difficult to put them on a par with the family pet. You can with a Sharan.

So is she a cat or a dog? That depends on what you're expecting. I have driven an old VW Espace for the last three years, and have come to enjoy the commanding driving position and extraordinary flexibility of the 'people carrier'. I read with bafflement attempts by VW and Ford (who sell the Galaxy's twin sister, the Galaxy) to claim that this was not a people carrier at all, and that it would drive just like a real car, honest. I have never found that the Espace drove like anything else, so I was not surprised that the Sharan was as easy to drive as any ground banger.

What did surprise me was how similar Sharan is to my elderly Espace. Fewer rattles, certainly, and a slightly more solid feel (it is made of steel, where the Espace's body is plastic). It also had stiffer suspension and harder seats: long journeys are not as relaxing, though the handling is a little better. But the overall feel is familiar. I suspect that would horrify VW's marketing people, but I was happy enough with it.

I was less happy that two of my minor Espace bugs have not been sorted 10 years after the French car's launch. First, anything you put on the massive dashboard whizzes across it unhampered (an anti-slip surface would do wonders). Second, it is true that up to seven seats can be arranged in astonishing combinations – but only if you wrestle with the primitive and frustrating fixing mechanism.

But in general I would be content driving a Sharan. It is a competent, flexible people carrier, with a good level of equipment and an adequate two-litre 115bhp engine, which is particularly smooth at speed. The instruments are clear, and it has a sophisticated electronic heating/cooling system and masses of extras.

Why buy a Sharan rather than a Galaxy? I drove a 2.8 litre V6 Galaxy for comparison, and can tell you that the extra power, which actually comes from a VW engine, transforms the car into an effortlessly surging beast that is fun to drive. But Ford versus VW? The Galaxy is a cheaper model for model, but VW claims the Sharan more than makes up for this with better equipment. The VW has a slightly classier feel – the radio looks more sophisticated, for example, although in my view Ford's column-mounted sound controls compensate for this in bags. In the end your decision should probably be made on the relative proximity/ helpfulness of your VW/Ford dealer. But don't be worried about switching from, say, a Volvo estate: people carriers are more than satisfactory alternatives to a 'real car'.

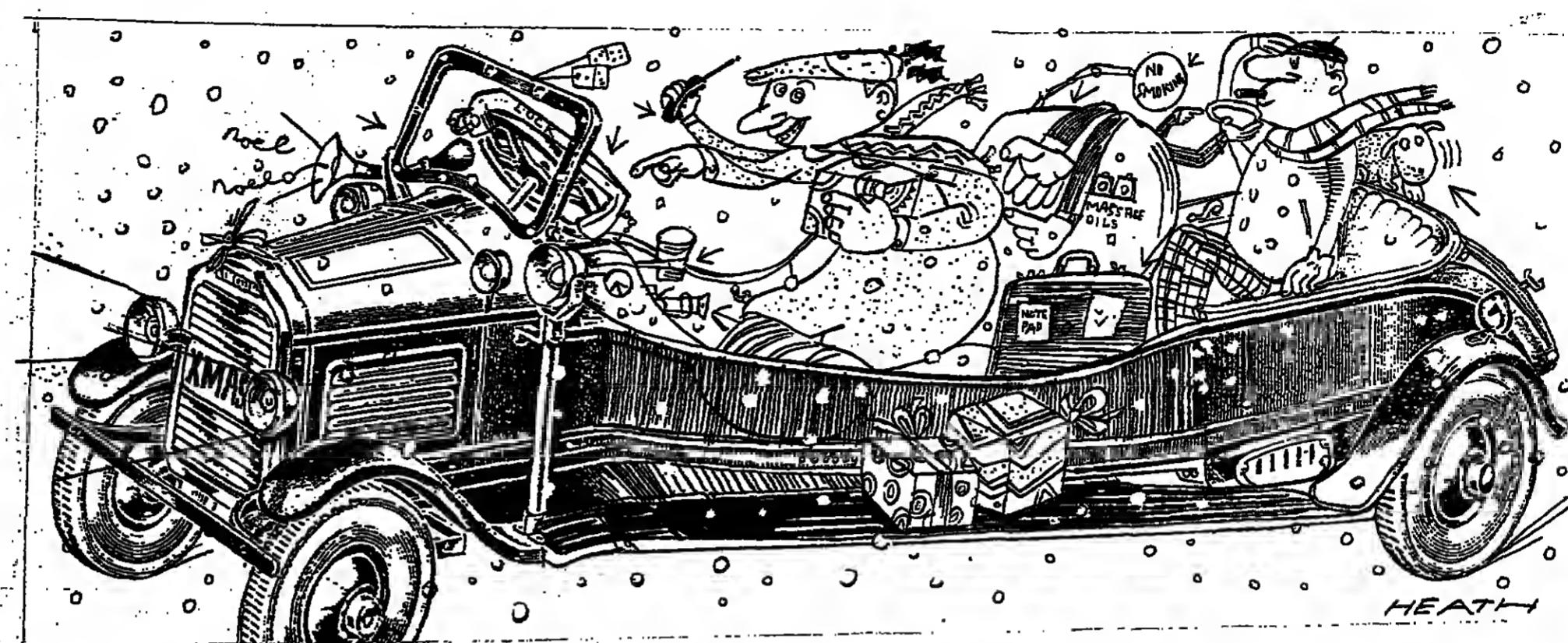
David Bowen

Specifications

Engine: 1984cc, four cylinders, 8 valves, 115bhp. Manual five-speed gearbox, top speed 110mph. 0-60mph 13.1 seconds, average consumption 23.7mpg.

There must be more classy car accessories than the Drivers Essential Aromatherapy Air Vent Freshener. Mustn't there?

By Adrian Turpin



No one finds the concept of an Alessi kettle strange. We are used to the idea of a pop art soap dish or an art deco CD rack. From the day that Terence Conran published his *House Book* in 1974, we have opened our doors to Design with a capital D, clapped it by the hand, and invited it to make free with all the paraphernalia of our kitchens and bathrooms. But not of our cars. The car accessory is still either inconspicuously practical or conspicuously tacky. Some – the delightfully named air freshener Eau d'Auto springs to mind – even manage to be both. We spend weeks of our lives on the road each year. Don't drivers deserve something a little more classy?

It could be that we don't actually want anything swish. Maybe the modern car – rolling out of the factory laden with mod cons – means we don't need add-ons. But maybe, having been offered a diet of tat for so long, we've just lost the

appetite for anything else, lost sight of the fact there can be anything else.

After all, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with a Fold-Away Drink Holder (Starcase, £7.99). Anything that stops half-open cans of Coke being kicked over the floor sounds like progress. But having the words "fold-away drink holder" stencilled on the front (in case you forget? To enlighten passengers?) does little to endear it and, whether mounted on the dashboard or clipped to the door, the FADH could never be described as elegant. Like the bulk of motoring stocking-filler, it appears to have been designed by some one who still believes you can have any colour as long as it's black or grey (and any material as long as it's plastic).

Imagine instead a drinks stand made of beech wood and aluminium; a chrome waste basket; replacement lighter that's as casually elegant as the Zippo in your pocket. Small objects of desire do not have to be naff.

So why do the gadget-makers presume the world and its mother is a travelling sales rep? I don't want the Car Note Indexer (Starcase, £7.99). I realise that it's actually a "dual information centre" but to me it still looks like a note book cum phone index. I can quite see that its sister product, the Stick-On Notes To Go memo pad (£7.99) might be "ideal for the busy executive who makes phone calls and plans his day whilst in transit". But in the interest of taste and road safety alike, I'd rather not find one at the end of the bed on Christmas morning.

Likewise, the Electronic Lumbar Massager Cushion (Innovations, £17.95), whose "four magnets and series of nodules" deliver a gentle going-over to the lower back. There is a place for everything. And in this case it's not the M40.

At £2.98, the Belcar sticky-back plastic ashtray is admittedly cheap, and it temporarily solves the problem of having to empty out the fitted ones. But it's

harder to see the point of the same company's 10ft extendable cigarette lighter. If passengers want to light up in the back, can't they just ask to pass the lighter? And, on the subject of tobacco, is the No Smoking Sign Air Freshener (Woolworths, 99p) really, as its makers claim, "a pleasant way to ask your passengers to stop smoking"?

The Drivers Essential Aromatherapy Air Vent Freshener may well let "the ancient art of aromatherapy, refined over the centuries" assuage me "with today's driving anxiety and stresses", but at the end of the day isn't it just another smell disperser? (Anyway, Dunlop's latest development, tyres that smell of flowers, sounds far more exciting.)

Unlike nodding dogs or furry dice, the above objects can't even be excused on the grounds that they're kitsch. For the average motorist, the only purpose in buying them, is to take some kind of preemptive revenge on car thieves.

That's the Christmas wish list, then. The wish list is somewhat shorter. It's possibly a little greedy to expect the futuristic Traffic Master YQ Navigation System (£149, plus radio airtime) or the Automobile Association's stolen vehicle tracker (£399). For a hundredth of the cost, the AA's blind spot mirrors are exceptional value. Not too festive, though.

Innovations' tiny Car Light Warning is closer to the mark. It buzzes if you leave the lights on. Cheap, too, at £4.95. But weighing up usefulness and fun, I'll lump for the Leading Edge's Voice Memo Key Fob (£19.99), a slickly rendered little gadget perfect for reminding yourself where you left the car. Or, oo second thoughts, just give me an Alessi kettle.

Innovations (01793 513936); Halfords (0345 626625); Leading Edge (0171-229 3338); Starcase gifts are found in C&A, Debenhams, Littlewoods, Argos & House of Fraser

How to become a master of the (pre-owned) Rolls

By James Ruppert

Ownership of a Rolls Royce need not be limited to the very rich. You, too, can own one provided you have around £10,000 to spare. That's surprisingly cheap when you consider that it will buy hand-built car which just happens to be the best car in the world, allegedly.

To become a pukka buyer of a pre-owned (or second hand) Rolls Royce, you need to face up to reality. There are cars that handle better; Jaguar and Bentleys are incredibly well built, but do need looking after because old ones will rust, the suspension and steering can show its age and a new interior could bankrupt you.

At the Hanwell Car Centre the stock is dominated by Shadows, Spirits and Eighties Bentleys. The Shadow 11s are pitched between £13,000 and £14,000. When I visited, I found it hard to separate the cars by anything except colour preference. Every one had a full service history and was immaculately presented. I suppose the 1978 Caribbean Blue Shadow with cream hide interior was showy enough for me at an attractive £13,950. There were several new shape Spirits with prices starting at just £17,950 for an early 1981 model. Among the Bentleys I spotted a 1986 Mulsanne at a remarkable £19,999, while the most affordable Turbo, a 1984 finished in black, was £21,950. Every example here is serviced before sale and comes with an 18-month parts and labour warranty.

If you want to take a risk among the private sellers there are lots of temptingly cheap Rollers out there. I rummaged around in the classified ads, in the basement to see what I could come up with. The first was a Shadow II at £4,995, which had been stored for five years and was in need of unspecified attention. Even more remarkable was a 1983 Spirit which had been vandalised, leaving a distraught owner asking £7,995 for it.

Both of them could be a drain on time and finances, but there are companies that can take the pain out of running and repairing a Roller. Legendary dismantlers KLW actually break damaged examples for the precious parts. Many classic car dealers have qualified mechanics who can make servicing costs containable and if you shop around it is possible to buy tyres, normally costing three figures, for around £50-£60.

There is more to checking over a used Rolls Royce, or Bentley, than kicking the tyres. The process is akin to a grand old family making sure that no undesirable are allowed to marry into the fold. There ought to be a file of history

several inches thick detailing every service, spare part, cough and sneeze of its life. Such a reassuring document tells you everything worth knowing from the last brake overhaul, to the latest financial damage for a set of wiper blades.

Either buy from a specialist, or get it checked over by one. Rolls Royce and Bentleys are incredibly well built, but do need looking after because old ones will rust, the suspension and steering can show its age and a new interior could bankrupt you.

At the Hanwell Car Centre the stock is dominated by Shadows, Spirits and Eighties Bentleys. The Shadow 11s are pitched between £13,000 and £14,000. When I visited, I found it hard to separate the cars by anything except colour preference. Every one had a full service history and was immaculately presented. I suppose the 1978 Caribbean Blue Shadow with cream hide interior was showy enough for me at an attractive £13,950. There were several new shape Spirits with prices starting at just £17,950 for an early 1981 model. Among the Bentleys I spotted a 1986 Mulsanne at a remarkable £19,999, while the most affordable Turbo, a 1984 finished in black, was £21,950. Every example here is serviced before sale and comes with an 18-month parts and labour warranty.

If you want to take a risk among the private sellers there are lots of temptingly cheap Rollers out there. I rummaged around in the classified ads, in the basement to see what I could come up with. The first was a Shadow II at £4,995, which had been stored for five years and was in need of unspecified attention. Even more remarkable was a 1983 Spirit which had been vandalised, leaving a distraught owner asking £7,995 for it.

Both of them could be a drain on time and finances, but there are companies that can take the pain out of running and repairing a Roller. Legendary dismantlers KLW actually break damaged examples for the precious parts. Many classic car dealers have qualified mechanics who can make servicing costs containable and if you shop around it is possible to buy tyres, normally costing three figures, for around £50-£60.

There is more to checking over a used Rolls Royce, or Bentley, than kicking the tyres. The process is akin to a grand old family making sure that no undesirable are allowed to marry into the fold. There ought to be a file of history

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CAPRI (82)	£1200	ALFA ROMEO 164 (90), 1.7, 1.8	£1600
ALFA 164 (82)	£1200	164 2.0, 2.0 T, 2.0 TURBO	£1600
ALFA 164 (82)	£1200	164 2.0 TURBO (82)	£2000
ALFA 164 (82)	£1200	MGB GT (79), vgc	£250
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money

For those willing to take a long-term view, there is nothing to beat buying shares in consistent money-spinners that have the capacity to pay handsome dividends

This has been such a good year for investors that talk of Christmas presents is probably redundant. Anybody who has been fully invested in the stock market this year will have good cause to be pleased with the outcome, and the latest interest rate cut - the first of several to come - will do no harm either. Those who played the US stock market, which is up more than 30 per cent, have done best of all. It has certainly borne out the wisdom of two old Wall Street rules of thumbs: markets always do well in years ending in the number five; and they always prosper in years preceding Presidential elections. Who said investing in the stock market was difficult?

Certainly not a remarkable lady called Anne Scheiber, whose exploits in the stock market have just come to light. For those of you who may have missed the story, this is the lady who spent her working life as a tax clerk in the Internal Revenue Service (the American equivalent of our Inland Revenue) and who took up investing only in her

fifties. Armed only with her meagre income, and despite being completely untutored in the finer arts of investment, Miss Scheiber was so successful at investing her modest spinner's mite that when she died earlier this year at the age of 101, she had turned her initial savings of \$5,000 into a fortune worth no less than \$22m. Her dividend income alone came to \$750,000 a year by the time of her death, completely dwarfing anything she had earned in her working life.

It is a remarkable story from which we can draw several morals. One is the obvious one that so-called experts have no prerogative to wisdom when it comes to investing in the stock market. Common sense and application can take you a long way. In Miss Scheiber's case, her success stemmed from following some simple rules - investing in a limited number of well-established companies that have a strong business franchise and the ability to generate significant amounts of cash now. Her biggest hold-

ings were in proven cash-generators such as Coca-Cola and the drugs company Bristol-Meyers Squibb.

A second, related, moral is that it pays to be patient. Putting money into smaller, more speculative companies will often generate bigger returns in the short run, but for those willing to take a long-term view, there is nothing to beat buying shares in consistent money-spinners that have the capacity to pay handsome dividends. The returns over time can be just as big, and the risks are much reduced, particularly if you

have personal knowledge of the company and what it does.

Just as important - and often neglected - is the simple power of compound interest. One of the great advantages that Miss Scheiber had over other ordinary investors was simply that she lived so long. Even doing nothing with your portfolio can make you a lot of money provided you reinvest the income and then hang around long enough to let the power of compounding work its magic.

A simple example underlines the point. Suppose you have £10,000 in capital, and put it into shares that grow on average by 7 per cent a year and yield 4 per cent - not unreasonable assumptions. Ignoring taxes for a moment, the initial sum will have grown to £50,121 within 10 years, £269,323 in 20 years, and £1,372,956 in 30 years - all without you doing anything about it. Even allowing for tax, the cumulative gains on both capital and reinvested income can be enormous.

And there is one other great advantage that comes if

you do not, as Miss Scheiber apparently did not, trade your shares actively. This is that the main tax liability - the tax on the capital gain - does not arise until you sell them. The sum that can compound by not trading your shares is therefore much greater than if you sold the shares each year and bought different ones. In one year the difference may be small, but over time the benefits of keeping the taxman's hands off your capital can literally run into thousands or even millions of pounds.

Nobody knows exactly how Miss Scheiber planned her investments. She was, by all accounts, a secretive and lonely lady whose wealth brought her little happiness - one moral which certainly needs no reinforcement. But it is tempting to think that an insight into the importance of tax was at the heart of her remarkable story. Having worked as a tax officer, nobody knew better than her the impact that it can have on your wealth.

At least one commentator

has noted the similarity between the methods of Miss Scheiber and those of Warren Buffett, the much more famous professional American investor. All the morals you can draw from the spinner's case are ones to which Mr Buffett himself has drawn attention - and to which he himself subscribes. Buy shares in good companies when they look cheap. Hold them for a long time. Don't overtrade. And do all you can to avoid tax. These are Mr Buffett's methods to a nutshell.

They are described at great length in one of the three books published this year, which I suggest that anyone with a serious interest in investment should consider for a Christmas present. The three titles are quite different in style and content, but all come highly recommended. The three are:

□ *The Craft of Investing* by John Train. Harper Business. John Train is a New York investment counsellor and author, who among other things now writes a regular column for the *Financial Times*. Light and easy to read, but full of wise words and advice. Particularly good on market cycles and the dangers of following fashion.

□ *The Schwartz Stock Market Handbook* by David Schwartz. Burleigh Publishing. £17.95. Call 01453-731173 for information. A fascinating account of historical trends in the UK and US stock markets, showing how shares have performed in each month of the year. Academics and efficient market theorists may be sniffy about the value of such historical evidence, but then who would ever believe that the rule about Wall Street and years ending in five would keep coming up?

Car warranties off the peg

Private motorists can now buy separate cover. By Clifford German

Motorists will shortly be able to buy warranties to cover cars that they buy privately against mechanical breakdown, thanks to a new scheme which is to be launched this week by Genesis Direct, a small Lincoln-based outfit, and backed by members of the Institute of Insurance Brokers.

Warranties, covering engines, clutch, transmission, drive systems, brakes, electrical and cooling systems, are available on new and second-hand cars bought from dealers.

More than half the seven million cars traded each year are bought at auction or privately and could not be covered by dealers' warranties.

Private buyers should already be able to buy a warranty following a service at an authorised dealer for their make of car, but few have done so. They will now be able to buy a warranty from an insurance broker, after they buy the car, when it has been ser-

viced, and when it needs to be taxed. Private motorists will also be able to buy the warranties when they want to sell and pass them on as an extra incentive to buyers of their cars. Cars which have been professionally serviced will be covered without further inspection. If no service history of the car is available, an inspection will be needed to qualify, however, costing perhaps £45.

Four levels of cover will be available and premiums for popular makes of car will range between £120 and £278 a year. The cheapest rate covers cars of any age or mileage for individual claims up to £250 within a year and 12,000 miles.

The most expensive premium available under the scheme provides cars up to three years old and with less than 40,000 miles on the clock with up to £1,000 worth of cover on each claim within a year or 20,000 miles. Cover for parts subject to wear and tear will

be based on the age and mileage of the car.

The make and value is immaterial for standard cars, according to Malcolm Moore, the general manager of the scheme's backers, but much higher rates, 2.5 times the basic rate, will apply on specialist cars such as Jaguars, Land Rovers, Range Rovers, Audi Quattro and other off-road 4x4 vehicles, and cover is not available for any modified and kit cars, American cars, luxury cars such as Rolls-Royce, Ferrari, Morgan and some models with a "history", such as the Triumph Stags.

Mr Moore hopes he might sell upwards of 30,000 policies in the first year. The motor trade is more sceptical. Similar schemes have blossomed and faded in recent years, perhaps because they were not actively marketed, perhaps because of disputes over the effects of wear and tear on replacement cover.



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Mercury	2.25%	1.25%	£501	7.0%
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The time is ripe for Tessa holders

Billions of pounds of Tessas are about to mature. That's a lot of cash looking for a home. By Clifford German

Day is fast approaching for holders of literally billions of pounds worth of tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas), who will have held their accounts for five years and will start to qualify to withdraw them without losing the tax-free interest they have been accumulating.

Individuals are allowed to invest up to £9,000 each in a Tessa, starting with up to £3,000 in the first year, £1,800 in each of the next three years and the balance in year five. The capital in a Tessa is not at risk, and the interest will be tax-free if the capital stays untouched over the five years after the account was opened.

There is an estimated £25bn invested in Tessas, of which more than £12bn was invested in the first six months of 1991 alone, when interest rates of 13 per cent tax-free were briefly on offer. The build-up has been slower in recent years, but the accumulated capital in maturing Tessas can be rolled over into a new Tessa, provided it is done within the first six months after maturity.

That means £12bn available for reinvestment or redeployment in the next six months, but the accumulated interest, totalling at least £3bn in the first six months of 1991 alone, will not be eligible for rolling over, and will have to find another home.

Where will they go? Tessa savers are risk-averse, and they like their Tessas. But interest rates have halved since 1991 and might be going lower still. Faced with a possible massive loss of funds the banks and building societies that offer Tessa accounts are trumpeting their performance over the last five years, and publishing league tables. Among the top 20 banks and building societies Cheshire Building Society and Bradford & Bingley head the list (see table). But according to Money Facts several smaller providers did better still, led by Kent Reliance Building Society, which generated £12,400, Dunfermline BS, National Counties BS, Julian Hodge Bank and the Melton Mowbray Building Society.

The bigger players are already dangling the prospect of extra attractions to persuade investors to renew their Tessas. Abbey National has announced three new Tessa accounts. The Tessa 3rd edition offers tiered rates that offer 5.85 per cent on amounts up to £3,000, rising in steps up to 6.6 per cent for the maximum level of savings, and is available to both new and roll-over investors.

Investors with a maturing Tessa fund of £9,000, however, are being offered a fixed-rate Tessa paying 7 per cent guaranteed, paid annually, plus a bonus structure which allows investors a 1 per cent bonus payable at maturity for every year in which average base rate has risen more than 1 per cent over the previous year.

The guaranteed-growth Tessa is also available only to existing Tessa holders with a £9,000 maturing fund. It guarantees a 41 per cent return on the capital over five years and has the same bonus structure if base rates rise.

Abbey National is also offering investors a two-year fixed interest bond, paying a minimum of 4.88 per cent net, for those who do not want to tie their money



£25bn question: With cash in hand, will investors be tempted to put it back into Tessas?

up for another five years or who have accumulated interest which they are not allowed to carry forward into a new Tessa.

Bradford & Bingley is offering its existing Tessa customers a fixed rate follow-up Tessa for the full £9,000 and a one-year special interest bond for maturing interest.

It is offering a loyalty bonus of 0.75 per cent a year tax-free if they roll over an existing Tessa account with a minimum of £500 into a new variable rate Tessa and keep it for a further five years. Including the bonus, the initial rates are 6.5 per cent on amounts up to £3,000, rising in steps to 7.5 per cent on a full £9,000 roll-over.

Rates can fluctuate but are guaranteed to be higher than balances in a 90-day account. Investors with at least £3,000 in Tessas from other providers are being offered a 0.5 per cent sweetener to switch to Bradford & Bingley.

Woolwich has similar ideas, and is offering a 0.25 per cent special bonus to roll-overs into a variable rate Tessa that starts off paying 6.1 per cent on amounts up to £6,600, rising to 7.05 per cent on a maximum £9,000 roll-over. Existing Tessa holders can also choose to roll over into an escalator Tessa, which will pay 5.75 per cent tax-free in the first year, rising in four annual steps to 10 per cent in the final year. Woolwich is also offering investors a new corporate bond Pep, available on 2 January, with an estimated tax-free yield of 7.1 per cent after deducting an annual management charge of 1.25 per cent. There will be no initial charge for early roll-overs.

Cheltenham & Gloucester, HSBC Investment Bank and Barclay's Bank have also recently announced special new options. HSBC Tessa Plus will offer 5 per cent a year guaranteed, plus a bonus of up to 30 per cent extra, making a 55 per cent total return if the top 100 shares on the London stock market rise by that amount.

Barclays is offering its customers with maturing Tessas only a new fixed rate Tessa earning 7.5 per cent tax-free that is expected to earn £9,000 into £12,921 in five years' time. You can expect similar sweeteners from all the big players in the Tessa market.

Fixed-rate Tessas actually did better than variable rate ones over the last five years, but there were not many of them, and it is hard to see providers rushing to offer attractive fixed rates while interest rates are falling. In spite of consumer loyalty and caution if interest rates continue to edge lower the attractions of tying

money up in Tessas for another five years, with or without the prospect of a loyalty bonuses, are no longer irresistible, and suppliers of other financial products are also touting their wares in the hope of attracting a slice of the maturing Tessa money.

The immediate rivals include personal equity plans, which like Tessas are tax-free. Unlike Tessas they can drop in value, but most would have outperformed Tessas over the last five years.

Corporate bond Pep currently earn more than a Tessa but can lose value if interest rates rise. Guaranteed income bonds have their supporters. So do guaranteed stock market bonds, which combine guarantees of the capital invested with possible capital gains if the stock market rises over the next five years. We shall look at these options in the next few weeks. Another less conventional alternative is to invest in traded endowment policies (see accompanying article).

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BEFORE YOU ROLL OVER

Do

Remember that Tessa accounts must be held for five years to escape tax. Bear in mind that interest rates and returns on Tessas in the next five years may be less than in the last.

Look around at the alternatives which may earn a lot more for relatively little risk.

Don't

Forget that the accumulated interest in your Tessa cannot be re-invested in a new Tessa. Be in a hurry to roll your Tessa over without looking around to see what competing Tessa providers offer.

Forget you have six months from the time your present Tessa matures to decide.

The best returns

Summary of five-year returns. (£9,000 invested over five years)			
Rank	Provider	Five-year maturity value	return % pa
1	Cheshire BS	12,097.11	8.55
2	Bradford & Bingley	12,093.40	8.55
3	Derbyshire BS	12,056.81	8.46
4	Halifax BS	12,040.86	8.42
5	Bristol & West	12,019.36	8.36
6	Woolwich BS	12,011.61	8.35
7	Leeds & Holbeck BS	11,975.10	8.26
8	Yorkshire BS	11,959.00	8.22
9	National & Provincial	11,946.07	8.18
10	Coventry BS	11,935.13	8.16
11	Skipton BS	11,928.70	8.14
12	Britannia BS	11,922.35	8.13
13	TSB	11,904.68	8.08
14	Northern Rock BS	11,875.59	8.01
15	Cheltenham & Gloucester	11,872.70	8.00
16	Royal Bank of Scotland	11,870.47	8.00
17	Nationwide BS	11,869.97	8.00
18	Alliance & Leicester	11,844.87	7.93
19	Leeds Permanent BS	11,841.24	7.92
20	Abbey National	11,830.92	7.90
21	Birmingham Midshires	11,820.86	7.87
22	Chelsea BS	11,807.24	7.84
23	Portman BS	11,783.36	7.78
24	Bristol & West BS	11,777.90	7.77
25	NatWest Bank	11,659.55	7.47
26	Lloyds Bank	11,522.30	7.12
27	Barclays Bank	11,493.67	7.05
28	Midland Bank	11,492.46	7.04

Source: Blay's MoneyMaster

No surrender

Trading insurance policies offers real returns

The traded endowment market, which buys and sells second-hand endowment and with-profits insurance policies, provides a real alternative for investors. You need the money to buy a policy and maintain the premiums until it matures, but as the buyer you get the accumulated bonuses and the terminal bonus on the policy. The profit is subject to capital gains tax, but this can be minimised by buying several policies maturing in different years.

Only policies with at least six or seven years on the clock, and between six and 15 years to maturity, are really tradable, but selling a policy secures an average 33 per cent better price than simply surrendering it to the insurance company, and still leaves an attractive return for buyers, according to Max Rosen, managing director of SEC, one of a dozen member firms of the Association of Policy Makers.

A portfolio of policies maturing over the next 10 years that was valued at £509,000 two years ago was recently revalued at £594,000. Market-makers claim, however, that it is still possible to buy a policy for £10,000, maintain premiums of say £50 a month for the next five years and receive a final return of £25,000 to £28,000 depending on the size of the terminal bonus.

But exactly what you get when your second-hand policy matures depends on how well the insurance company invests your premiums, on the annual bonuses it adds to the value of the policy you have bought and on the size of the terminal bonus it awards.

The risks are much the same as if you buy a brand-new with-profits endowment policy to pay off your mortgage, but the time-frame is shorter and as the maturity date gets closer the importance of the terminal bonus rises, especially if the policy is issued by a company like Scottish Amicable that traditionally pays a high

Clifford German

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FEAR OF FINANCE
Clifford German



Christmas came early this week for borrowers generally and home-owners in particular, thanks to Santa Ken and Santa Eddie and those hard-working elves at Halifax, Nationwide, Abbey National and so on down the list. Anyone with a one-year mortgage discount of 6.1 per cent from Yorkshire Building Society will shortly be paying just 1.39 per cent interest!

What we borrowers really need next is a cut in the interest rates that the credit card companies levy. If you fail to pay off your balance in full by the end of the free credit period, interest rates range from 1.5 per cent to 1.75 per cent a month and, including annual charges, the annual percentage rates for the vast majority of cards range between 21 per cent and 23 per cent a year on unpaid balances.

But Christmas is precisely the time of year when credit card companies really clean up because shoppers traditionally over-spend on their plastic and simply lack the means to pay the bills promptly in January. Retail spending using credit cards over Christmas is usually more than 50 per cent above the annual average.

So far only Save & Prosper has cut a quarter point off the rate it charges on its base-rate linked cards, but these have no free credit period. By the time the rest of the pack get round to a cut they will have had at least two months feasting on fat post-Christmas credit balances. The amount outstanding on credit balances rises to an annual peak and it takes until the end of February before the seasonal excess is paid off.

Christmas brings an increasing collection of gift suggestions. Unit trusts and investment trusts are suitable gifts for children, especially as the risks are well spread and the investment can be added to regularly to build up a larger holding over time and

transferred to the child's own name when they reach 18. Autif, the unit trust trade body, publishes a free guide on how to make gifts without incurring tax liabilities. Call 0181-207 1361. Johnson Fry combines a trust investing in five high-yielding shares with a trust that uses a child's tax-free income and capital gains allowances to build up an investment fund.

Invesco offers a low-risk investment fund for regular savings as low as £20 and lump sums of just £50. Named after Rupert Bear, it is targeted at grandparents, parents and godparents investing for children. Harpenden Building Society has a special high-rate account paying 6.75 per cent (which can be paid tax-free) on amounts as small as £5. National Savings offer tax-free children's bonus bonds in amounts as small as £25, with a guaranteed 7.85 per cent return if held for five years. Halifax Building Society offers children's bonus bonds with an identical return.

Many friendly societies, like the Southampton-based Foresters Friendly Society, will open accounts for as little as £1 a month to build up a nest-egg for the future. The money builds up into a tax-free lump sum, but charges on small sums can be high.

The most popular individual shares at this time of year are those that also offer shareholders perks. P&O give discounts on ferry sailing, British Airways gives discount vouchers on selected flights, and Laura Ashley shareholders get a 15 per cent discount on one full-price purchase. AB Foods, Austin Reed, Burton Group, Forte, General Accident, Greenalls, Kwik-Fit, Ladbrokes, Moss Bros, Next, Scottish & Newcastle, Storehouse, Vaux and Whitbread are also among the 150 companies listed in stockbrokers Henry Cooke Lumsden's book of perks for shareholders.

Best borrowing rates

	Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption penalty
MORTGAGES						

Fixed rates	0800 774499	0.50 to 1/1/97	70	£250	3 yrs unemployment ins Free redundancy ins to 31/12/95	1st 5 yrs: index determined 1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Chesire BS	0800 243278	7.49 to 1/1/01	90	—	£300 cash rebate	To 1/1/01: 6 mths interest
Chestire BS	0800 243278	7.49 to 1/1/01	90	—	£300 cash rebate	To 1/1/01: 6 mths interest

Variable rates	Northern Rock BS	0800 561500	1.44 to 1/2/97	90	—	Refund valuation fee
Greenwich BS	0181 859 8212	4.99 for 3 yrs	95	—	—	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed 1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Abbey National	0800 555100	6.34 to 31/1/01	75	—	Refund valuation fee	1st 5 yrs: 6 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 4 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 5/3 mths interest determined

First time buyers fixed rates	Bank of Ireland	01734 510100	0.99 to 1/1/97	95	£280	—
Melton Mowbray BS	01664 63337	4.59 to 28/2/98	100	—	—	1st 5 yrs: 6 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 4 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 5/3 mths interest
Melton Mowbray BS	01664 63337	6.20 to 31/1/95	95	£99	V&A £99 fees both refunded	1st 5 yrs: 6 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 4 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 5/3 mths interest

First time buyers variable rates	Greenwich BS	0181 858 8212	3.99 for 2 yrs	95	—	Refund valuation fee
Northern Rock BS	0800 561500	5.19 to 2/2/99	95	—	—	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed 1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
N&P BS	0800 808080	6.39 for 5 yrs	90	—	Free MP to 85% LTV	1st 5 yrs: 6/10/30 days interest

PERSONAL LOANS	Telephone	APR	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)			
Unsecured	0141 248 9966	14.90E	With insurance	Without insurance	—	—
Direct Line	0141 248 9966	14.90E	£114.41	£102.59	—	—
Midland Bank	0800 180180	15.40	£115.54	£103.14	—	—
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	16.20	£113.54	£103.33	—	—

Secured (second charge)	Telephone	Max LTV	Advance	Term		
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	8.80	Neg	£3K - £15K	6 mths to 25 years	
First Direct	0800 242424	9.70	80%	£3K to neg	Up to 40 years	
Royal B of Scotland	Via branch	9.80	70%	£2.5K-£100K	3 years - retirement	

OVERDRAFTS	Telephone	Account	Authorised	Unauthorised		
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76	9.5	2.18	29.5
Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 555595	Alliance	0.75	9.5	2.20	29.8
Abbey National	0500 200300	Current	0.79	9.9	2.18	29.5

CREDIT CARDS	Telephone	Card	Min income	Rate per %	APR	Annual fee
Standard	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.986	12.10	— 0
Coutts & Co	0171 753 1718	Visa	—	0.9875	13.20	£18C
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60	£12
Gold cards	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.5417M	11.14	£120
Co-operative Bank	01702 362280	Visa	£20,000	1.05	14.50	£35H
Royal B of Scotland	0800 200400	Visa	£20,000	1.14	15.90	£35

STORE CARDS	Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Paid by other methods			
John Lewis	Via store	% pm	APR	% pm	APR	—
Marks & Spencer	01244 681681	1.90A	25.30	2.00A	25.80	—
Sears	Via store	1.94	25.90	2.20	29.8	—

APR Annualised percentage rate
A 1.58% C 20.0% APR for o/s bal over £1K.
E Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years.
F Annual fee waived after first year if E&F charged to card during previous year.
G All rates subject to change without notice.
M Equivalent to base rate.
N Moneyfacts 01692 500677
14 December 1995

Best savings rates

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS	01202 252444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	5.00	Year
Skipton BS	01756 705511	3 High Street	Instant	£2,000	5.60	Month
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Postbank	Instant	£5,000	5.90	Year
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Go Direct	Instant	£20,000	6.10	Year

INSTANT ACCESS	01538 392808	Capital Trust	Postal	£2,500	5.60	Year
BBW Asset	0800 303330</					

A path through the corporate minefield

The UK corporate bond world is young, small and volatile. Continuing our series on investment vehicles, Alison Eadie looks at the corporate bond personal equity plan

Corporate bond personal equity plans are new financial animals based on a young and developing market. British companies only started to issue bonds in any volume from the mid-1980s when inflation began to fall. The UK corporate bond universe is still very small compared with the longer-established equities market. Barclays de Zoete Wedd puts the total value of PEP-qualifying investments at £32.2bn. The value of UK ordinary shares, by contrast, is around £340bn.

Ian Spreadbury, manager of Fidelity's MoneyBuilder corporate bond PEP, estimates that there are around 100 reasonably liquid "qualifying" corporate bonds (ie issued by UK companies not in the financial sector). He excludes preference and convertible stocks, which MoneyBuilder avoids as too volatile. The number of issuers is less than 100 as some companies have more than one qualifying bond.

Because of the limited market, MoneyBuilder uses the half of the fund that does not have to be in "qualifying" bonds to diversify into other "non-qualifying" fixed-interest stocks. The choice of investments then rises to 500 bonds, plus about 70 different government stocks, or gilts. At present MoneyBuilder is spread 55 per cent in qualifying bonds, 23 per cent in gilts and 22 per cent in financial, foreign-issued Eurosterling and other non-qualifying bonds.

The £60m fund now holds around 50 investments, which will rise to 60 as more money flows in. Designed to appeal to building society investors, the emphasis is on avoiding risk. "Investors want stability and security," says Mr Spreadbury. For that reason no one corporate issuer accounts for more than 3 per cent of the portfolio, and the "non-qualifying" allocation is used to diversify into good-quality credits. These presently include European Investment Bank, Bayerische Landesbank and Abbey National.

MoneyBuilder uses a stock selection rather than an interest-rate investment strategy. Mr Spreadbury believes that positioning a fund according to the direction of interest rates carries a higher degree of capital risk. Rates are notoriously difficult to guess right. He prefers to neutralise the effect of interest rates and avoid excessive capital volatility through buying a mix of long and short bonds from 30 to five years' maturity. "We put our bets on where we have done our research," he explains.

This research involves close liaison between the fixed-interest team and Fidelity's equity analysts. Mr Spreadbury looks closely at corporate balance sheets, debt-to-equity ratios and cash flows to see if companies can finance capital expenditure and cover interest bills comfortably. He checks the value of corporate assets, to see if they are over- or under-valued in the accounts, and assesses the quality of management. He stresses the importance of meeting senior management on a regular basis.

Much time is also spent poring over prospectuses to establish how bonds rank relative to other company debt and whether they have a charge on assets or

any other built-in protection. Some bonds can be sold back to the company at par if the company restructures and the bonds fall below their credit rating. Most cannot.

"You also have to think laterally about what can happen to a company to change its credit rating," Mr Spreadbury says. Lateral thinking is very much required in the present takeover bonanza on the London stock market. It has proven conclusively that what is good for shareholders can be bad for bondholders.

MoneyBuilder has shied away from bonds issued by utilities, particularly those of regional electricity companies, because as share prices have soared on takeover activity, bond prices have fallen.

Bond prices reflect nervousness about increased indebtedness needed to fund takeovers. Granada and Forte bonds have both underperformed since Granada launched its bid for the hotels group, as the combined group is likely to be more highly geared than the companies individually.

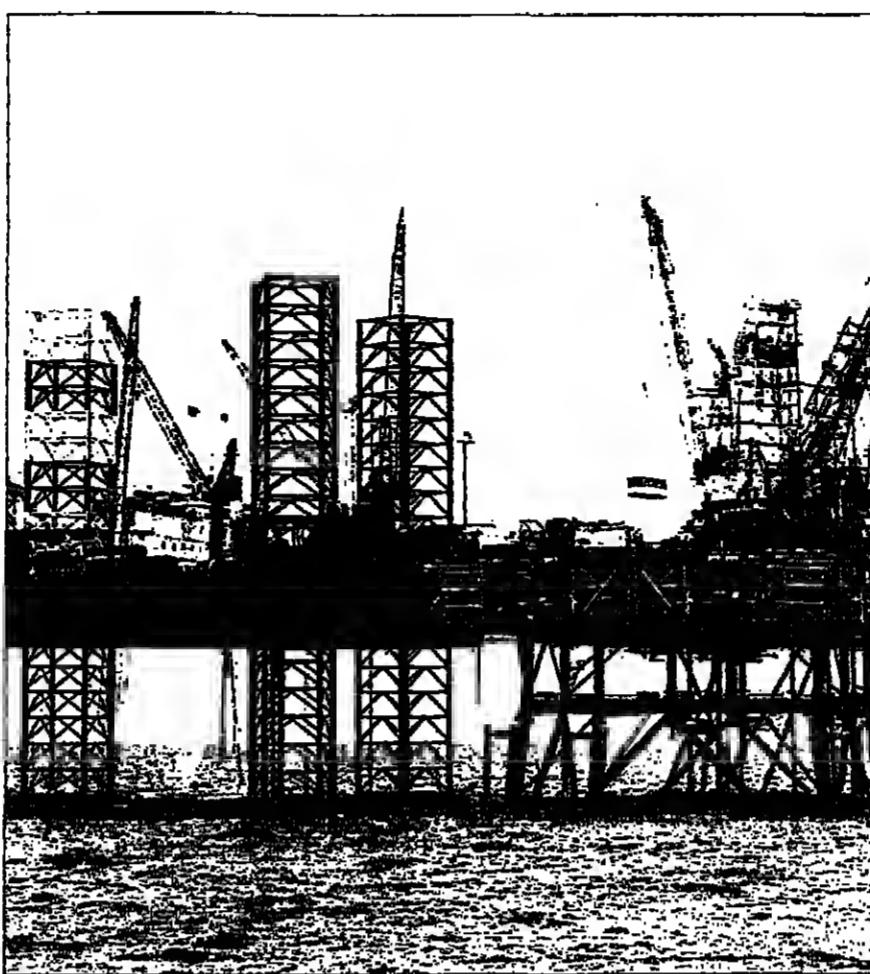
Out- and under-performance are measured by the bond's behaviour relative to an equivalent maturity gilt. The higher yield on bonds over an equivalent gilt compensates for its extra credit risk and degree of illiquidity. Mr Spreadbury's job is to ferret out mispriced bonds. The market is not perfect and recently got British Gas wrong, he points out. British Gas bonds have recently been downgraded from triple-A to double-A-minus and single-A1. MoneyBuilder tends to invest in the better credit risks of single to triple-A bonds, but will consider a triple-B if internal research indicates that the market has the rating wrong.

Mr Spreadbury believes that yield margins, which are historically very tight, (ie close to gilt yields), will widen. He argues that the supply of gilts will diminish as the public sector borrowing requirement falls, making gilts more expensive and reducing the yield. Corporate bond supply, however, is expected to increase as companies rush to raise cheap money. Bonds will get cheaper, yields will edge higher, and margins will widen.

The wild card, admits Mr Spreadbury, is the Tessa effect. A whopping £16bn in tax-exempt special savings accounts matures in the first quarter next year and an unquantifiable chunk of it could end up in corporate bond PEPs. If demand proves greater than supply, bond yields could even go below gilt yields, Mr Spreadbury says.

Despite this, Mr Spreadbury is sticking with his prediction of margin widening longer-term, and has positioned MoneyBuilder for a comfortable level of protection. As the price risk of widening margins is greatest in longer maturities, only gilts and the better-quality corporate bonds are held at the long end.

(MoneyBuilder is a specialised unit trust set up for investors wanting personal equity plans investing in corporate bonds. There are no front-end or exit charges, the running yield, excluding any capital gains when bonds mature, is currently 7.82 per cent, and the annual management charge is 0.7 per cent.)



A risky business: The recent downgrading of British Gas bonds shows the dangers of the market

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THE WEEK AHEAD		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
TELEVISION by Gerard Gilbert		The Wilderness Years 7.30pm BBC2. The King demands the Jony Blair leadership - challenge brings him up to date and completes this excellent series (330505).	Film: The Man in the White Suit (Alexander Mackendrick 1951 UK). 2.25pm C4. Alec Guinness discovers an indestructible fabric that doesn't need cleaning. Classic Ealing satire (465877). Omikron 10.20pm BBC1 (above). Now the shock has worn off, a more considered appraisal of Peter Cook (229161). Film: Five Easy Pieces (Bob Rafelson 1970 US). 11.20pm BBC2. Jack Nicholson's most complex performance to date, by a mile (548703).	Film: The Ladykillers (Alexander Mackendrick 1955 UK). 2.20pm C4. Cary Grant masterpiece about a gang of thwarted crooks (414285).	Film: Five Easy Pieces (Bob Rafelson 1970 US). 11.20pm BBC2. Jack Nicholson's most complex performance to date, by a mile (548703).	Secret Lives: Che Guevara 9pm C4 (above). How did an asthmatic middle-class Argentinian become an icon for 1960s revolution? (5570).	The Last of the Mohicans (Michael Mann 1992 US). 9.30pm BBC1 (above). James Fenimore Cooper provides an unlikely movie hit for the 1990s, with Daniel Day-Lewis as Hawkeye (167532).
Radio by Robert Hanks		The Doomsday Letters 8.40am R4. Sir Copeau Ticker puts current fears of environmental crisis into the context of past fears of the end of the world.	Paging Doctor Love 7.20pm R4. Anthony Clare analyses cinema's obsession with psychiatry, and introduces the four archetypes - Dr Dippy, Dr Know-All, Dr Evil and the supremely desirable Dr Love.	A Holst Evening 7pm R3. The high point of a short Holst season (which culminates on Christmas Day with the opera <i>The Perfect Fool</i>); tonight's programme includes his own recording of his abattoir, <i>The Planets</i> .	Do Vampire Bats Have Friends? 9pm C4. Do non-human animals think - and, if so, what about? (9117). Britannia 9.30pm BBC1 (above). Life on board the Royal Yacht (17049).	Wish Me Luck as You Wave Me Good-bye 7.20pm R4. Did-world chummer Harry Thompson looks at the modern way of death, from funeral supermarkets to cryogenic suspension. A nice antidote to seasonal cheer.	Film: Annie Hall (Woody Allen 1977 US) 12.25am BBC1. It sparked a silly hat fashion, but great comedy from Allen and Keaton nonetheless (5966743).

Sunday Television and Radio

BBC1

6.25 **Film** Wonderful Life (Sidney J Furie 1964 US). Cliff Richard and the Shadows decide to shoot their own movie in the Canary Islands (2963307).

8.15 **This Multimedia Business** (S) (6273098). 8.30 Breakfast with Frost (33611).

9.30 **Promise of His Glory**. Hymns from the Church of St John the Baptist in Bromsgrove (S) (6844765).

10.15 **See Here! Christmas Special** (S) (450475).

10.45 **Europa 96**. Live coverage of the draw for next year's European Championship Final from the International Convention Centre in Birmingham. Introduced by Desmond Lynn (S) (785833).

2.45 **EastEnders** (S) (4281104). * 4.10 **Auntie's Christmas Crackers** (8094291).

4.20 **The Bookshop** (S) (9407494). * 4.50 **The Clothes Show** (1094340).

5.15 **The Great Antiques Hunt - Christmas Special** (S) (7993233). *

6.00 **News**; **Weather** (991524). *

6.20 **Local News** (S) (83430).

6.25 **Songs of Praise**. Carols from Cirencester (S) (5469494). *

7.00 **Just William**. William gets the yuletide spirit in the concluding slice of naughtiness (S) (6727). *

7.30 **Film** The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad (David Zucker 1988 US). Big, fat goofy laughs in this terrific slacker, surreal comedy starring stone-faced Leslie Nielsen as Lt. Frank Drebin blundering his way through a drift-as-you-please plot about drugs and a plot to assassinate the Queen. Co-stars Priscilla Presley and OJ Simpson (S) (375454). *

8.50 **News**; **Weather** (488475).

9.05 **The Vicar of Dibley** (R) (S) (661727). + 9.35 **Cold Comfort Farm**. See Preview, p28 (R) (S) (239746). *

11.15 **Heart of the Matter**. Antenatal testing for genetic disorders (S) (387651).

11.55 **Golf**. The Johnnie Walker Championship from Tryall Resort, Jamaica (S) (142543).

1.25 **Weather** (274787). 7.15 **30am**.

REGIONS: Wales: 1.30pm News; Weather. NI: 1.45pm **Now You're Talking**. 1.10pm **Our Roving Reporter**. 1.20pm **The Phil Silvers Show**. 1.25pm **Local News**.

BBC2

7.30 **Children's BBC**: Tales of the Tooth Fairies (4591307). 7.35 **The Adventures of Skippy** (752765). 8.00 **Playdays** (514252). 8.20 **Felix the Cat** (25253).

8.35 **Jackson**. Gary Olsen reads (S) (8283036).

8.50 **Children's BBC**: *Bitsa* (1727678). 9.05 **The Animals of Farthing Wood** (4628611). 9.35 **Skeleton Warriors** (4675630). 9.55 **Travel Bug** (1127727). 10.25 **Grange Hill** (2738272). 10.50 **The Queen's Nose** (9838456).

11.15 **Weekend Break** (S) (1654052).

11.40 **Star Trek** (R) (430475). *

12.30 **The Sunday Show** (S) (8818920).

1.15 **The O Zone**. Boyzone shoot their latest video (R) (S) (4873890).

1.30 **Regional Programmes** (14630).

2.00 **Film** The Man in the Sixth Happiness (Mark Robson 1958 UK). English servant girl Ingrid Bergman brings Christianity to World War Two China (107655).

4.30 **Std Sunday**. The men's downhill from Val Gardena (S) (6409475).

5.10 **Rugby Special**. Highlights from England vs Western Samoa (S) (3041611).

6.10 **The Trials of Life**. The extraordinary lengths animals will go to mate (R) (S) (296307). *

7.00 **On the Road Again**. Simon Dring reaches India in his search for the old hippie trail (S) (4369). *

7.30 **The Wilderness Years**. The Labour Party redefines itself under Neil Kinnock (S) (83843). *

8.30 **The Money Programme**. The changing face of the toy market (650475). *

9.10 **Hello and Goodbye**. Memorable moments from chat shows, according to this Danny Baker file (R) (S) (91681).

9.30 **The Mrs Meriton Show**. Lord Lichfield, Carol Vorderman and Barbara Windsor are the faux-chat show guests (S) (75123). *

10.00 **Easy Rider** (Dennis Hopper 1969 US). Hugely influential pothead road movie in which bikers Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper set out to do their own stoned thing. Turned Jack Nicholson - a southern lawyer they meet along the way - into a star (14814). *

11.30 **Born to Be Wild - The Story of Easy Rider**. Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda and others tell the tale (37494).

12.00 **Film** Hell's Angels on Wheels (Richard Rush 1967 US). Jack Nicholson, a drifter called Poet working in a gas station, joins a gang of Hell's Angels but clashes with the gangleader (S03437). 7.15 **4.00pm**.

REGIONS: Wales: 1.30pm Welsh Lobby. 5.10 **Scrum** 5.15pm. 1.30pm **Country Times**. 5.10 **Rugby Special** from Northern Ireland.

ITV/London

6.00 **GMTV**. 6.00 **The Sunday Review**. 6.30 **News and Sport**. 7.00 **The Sunday Programme** (70630).

8.00 **Disney Club** (S) (96572678). *

10.15 **Link** (S) (748475). *

10.30 **This Sunday**. A discussion on the existence of angels, some special Jewish recipes for Hanukkah and, at 11.00am, Morning Worship from Timperley Methodist Church, Greater Manchester (S) (94543). *

12.30 **CrossTalk** (19185).

1.00 **News**, **Weather** (48745920). *

1.10 **40 Years of ITN**. Archive clips and anecdotes from past and present newscasters (519104).

2.00 **Euro 96**. The Draw - Live. Bob Wilson on location at Birmingham's International Convention Centre (1583807).

2.45 **The London Lecture**. Jeremy Isaacs concentrates on the positive aspects of the capital (3198475).

3.35 **Opening Shot** (S) (1460748).

4.05 **The Sunday Match** (5289340).

5.05 **The Practice** (2331017).

5.35 **Jane Atnher's 12 Days of Christmas**. Dishes include duck with prune, thyme and lemon stuffing (7080807).

6.05 **London Tonight** (271272). *

6.20 **News**, **Weather** (2577272). *

6.30 **Schofield's Quest**. If you're still interested, the last in this series updates earlier stories - like the search for the final resting place for King Arthur, and the attempt to lift the gypsy curse allegedly put on Birmingham City Football Club (S) (104).

7.00 **The Coronation Street Party**. See Preview, p28 (1730). *

8.00 **The Beatles Anthology**. *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and all that. See Preview, p28 (S) (878768). *

9.00 **London's Burning**. A big car crash, and opening night at Bayleaf's restaurant (S) (6914). *

10.00 **News**, **Weather** (595630).

10.15 **Blitz** (Peter Yates 1968 US). Steve McQueen and that famous car-chase sequence. Not a lot else to it, really. Robert Vaughn is the unconvincing baddie, and Ingrid Bissell the romantic interest (9593217).

12.20 **London Stage 95**. Sheridan Morley does his Barry Norman impersonation (6454401).

12.55 **Sledge Hammer** (2469166).

1.25 **Hollywood Report** (R) (S) (9514321).

2.00 **Cut the Music** Cuts Van Halen (1322627).

2.55 **Live from London**. Sandie Shaw (9119437).

4.05 **Opening Shot** (R) (50264895).

4.30 **Holidays and Holidays** (5-705383).

4.55 **Travel Trails**. North Wales (187857).

5.30 **News** (76654), to 6.00pm.

Channel 4

6.00 **Blitz** (R) (S) (9884779).

6.55 **The Herbs** (R) (7923277).

7.10 **Lift Off** (R) (S) (4903104).

7.40 **The Great Bong** (S) (70617982).

7.55 **The Baby-Sitter Club** (3005901).

8.30 **Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?** (S) (7311456).

8.55 **Exodus** (S) (7323299).

9.20 **Running the Halls** (R) (S) (8533475).

9.45 **The Pink Panther Show** (S) (7700123).

10.00 **Aaah!!! Real Monsters** (7496494).

10.15 **Saved by the Bell** (2734456).

10.40 **Wise Up**. Young people report (S) (8620543).

11.15 **Rawhide**. The drovers plan a mid-summer Xmas party (4075131).

12.15 **Mission Impossible**. A chemical warfare project is being planned against the free world. The IMF to the rescue (780388). *

1.15 **Football** (Lazio vs Sampdoria (69135631).

3.30 **Butter**. Jane Horrocks, Richard E Grant and Helena Bonham-Carter in a short about a woman's obsession with food (9013630).

3.50 **Whisky Galore** (Alexander Mackendrick 1948 UK). Eating comedy classic about a mythical Hebridean island in wartime, whose inhabitants - parched of whisky - discover 50,000 bottles of the stuff shipwrecked on their shores. Basil Radford is the laird they must get around (276765).

5.25 **News**, **Weather** (5639098).

5.30 **Oakyards**. Last Monday's episode of the teen soap (R) (S) (2535). *

6.00 **The Persuaders!** Danny and Brett help a Russian Grand Duchess establish her right to a collection of jewels (572454).

7.00 **Equinox**. The "over-unity" devices which may hold the key to unlimited energy supplies derived from water. See Preview, p28 (S) (8272).

8.00 **Storm Chasers**. Recycled Equinox about enthusiasts who chase tornados around the American Mid-West (R) (S) (7920).

9.00 **The Last Emperor** (Bernardo Bertolucci 1987 China/It). The epic, sumptuously photographed story of Chinese Emperor Pu Yi, from living god to miserable prisoner in the People's Republic. Peter O'Toole plays Pu Yi's tutor (814562).

12.00 **Holiday Snaps**. Recycled Red Zone documentary about members of Location Photography Club, on location in the Algarve with glamour models Sandy, Rachel and Maria (R) (46895).

12.30 **Marie in the City** (Marquise LaPage 1987 Can). An abused 13-year-old girl runs away from home and befriends a prostitute. Any songs? (3658037). 7.15 **10pm**.

ITV/Regions

Midlands: As London懈: 12.30pm **Diarmuid** (161512). 2.00 **Run** (752357). 2.45 **Re: OM** (5654623). 5.10 **Football** (752353). 7.00 **Wings** (752354). 7.50 **Police** (752355). 10.15 **Wessex** (752356). 10.45 **Diarmuid** (161513). 12.30pm **Start Story** (572452).

TYNE TEE/SW/NORTH: As London懈: 12.25pm **Yours** (The Real Ghosts) (5361526). 2.45 **Film: Song and Port Wine** (5361526). 4.30 **True** (The Famous Five) (5361527). 5.00 **Richard Whiteley** (5361528). 7.00 **Wessex** (752351). 7.50 **TV** (752352). 10.15 **Wessex** (752353). 10.45 **Start Story** (572452).

CENTRAL: As London懈: 2.45pm **The Coming Laugh** (161514). 4.30 **TV** (752354). 7.00 **Wessex** (752355). 7.50 **Start Story** (572451). 10.15 **Hearts** (5361525). 10.45 **Wessex** (752356).

WY: As London懈: 2.45pm **West** (752357). 4.30 **TV** (752358). 7.00 **Wessex** (752359). 7.50 **Start Story** (572452).

WES: As London懈: 2.45pm **Football** (752350). 4.30 **TV** (752351). 7.00 **Wessex** (752352). 7.50 **Start Story** (572453).

WES/NORTH: As London懈: 2.45pm **Football** (752351). 7.15 **3.15 Fair's Fair** (752352). 4.30 **TV** (752353). 7.45 **Start Story** (572454).

WES: As London懈: 11.15 **TV** (752354). 11.45 **Start Story** (572455). 12.30pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361521). 1.30pm **TV** (752356). 2.00pm **Wessex** (752357). 2.30pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361522). 3.00pm **TV** (752358). 3.30pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361523). 4.00pm **Wessex** (752359). 4.30pm **TV** (752360). 5.00pm **Wessex** (752361).

S4: As London懈: 2.45pm **Running the Halls** (752351). 5.15 **Start Story** (572452). 6.15 **Wise Up** (430331). 9.45 **Moveinacht** (451704). 10.15 **TV** (752352). 10.45 **Start Story** (572453). 11.15 **TV** (752353). 11.45 **Start Story** (572454). 12.30pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361521). 1.30pm **Start Story** (572455). 2.00pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361522). 2.30pm **Start Story** (572456). 3.00pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361523). 3.30pm **Start Story** (572457). 4.00pm **Film: Clash of the Titans** (5361524). 4.30pm **Start Story** (572458). 5.00pm **Start Story** (572459).

WY: As London懈: 2.45pm **Football** (752350). 4.30 **TV** (752351). 7.00 **Wessex** (752352). 7.50 **Start Story** (572453).

WY: As London懈: 2.45pm **Football** (752350). 4.



The big picture

Raging Bull
Sat 12.15am BBC2

The Scorsese/Di Niro partnership has just given birth to *Casino*, but surely their relationship has never been as fruitful as it was in 1980 when it produced *Raging Bull*, the uncompromising tale of the rise and fall of boxer Jake La Motta. It is not what you might describe as comfortable viewing. Every scene drips with uneasy menace - from the in-the-ring close-ups of glove-shattering nose-bone, to the Oscar-winning De Niro (above) beating up his brother (the incomparable Joe Pesci) whom he suspects of messing with his wife (Cathy Moriarty).

Would you buy a second-hand baby from John Hurt? This improbability might explain Kerry Fox's committed performance in *Saigon Baby* (Sat BBC2), Guy Hibbert's Philippines-filmed (the Thai government refused permission) *Screen Two* drama.

Fox plays a woman whose hormones are not so much kicking in as taking over. She and husband Douglas Hodge - something obscenely well-paid in the Far East - can't have children of their own, and the Thai authorities have strict guidelines as to who can adopt. Enter long-haul hippie John Hurt, looking very much like the John Hurt who died so miserably in *Midnight Express*, who claims Saigon is a hot market for babies. So, ditching her dithering, wimpy hobbie, Fox heads for Vietnam with Hurt - and a political awakening.

Saigon Baby is a very good drama of its type - believable, well acted and well written. Most "issue dramas" come with dots for the viewer to join up. Another fine drama this weekend is a repeat, but, as TV companies often say more in hope than realism, that it consumes. Patterson and a band of other small-time inventors say the boffins are wrong - and, being

Brady's first-rate adaptation of Stella Gibbons's 1932 comedy classic, directed with obvious enjoyment by John Schlesinger.

The sex and well-cast Kate Beckinsale plays Gibbons's dapper, flapper heroine, imposing herself on a distant branch of the family and trying to bring these recalcitrant rustics "round to a higher common sense". Odd that one of the best entertainments in the cinema and on TV in 1995 - this and Amy Heckerling's terrific comedy about spoilt Californian teenagers, *Clueless*, should both draw their inspiration from Jane Austen's *Emma*.

If we ever find ourselves riding around in water-propelled cars or aeroplanes, ejecting harmless planet-detecting gases, we will have one Jim Patterson to thank. According to *Equinox: It Runs on Water* (Sun C4), we will have no reason to thank the scientific establishment, who are rigid in their orthodoxy, one of which is that a machine cannot emit more energy than it consumes. Patterson and a band of other small-time inventors say the boffins are wrong - and, being

mosh engineers, are putting theory into practice.

The *Coronation Street* Party (Sun ITV) takes the form of a quiz show, which in turn is an excuse for lots of clips. There's also a chance to win one of Raquel's dresses and, and *Liz Dawn* (Vera Duckworth) sings "As Time Goes By". Say goodbye to those viewers, BBC1.

Sex with Paula (Sat C4) was actually filmed in 1986,

but never screened, a victim of the great Aids hysteria of that year. The idea's simple - and Paula Yates used it in her "on the bed with" slot on *The Big Breakfast*. She gets into a compromising position with a celebrity friend - and quizzes him/her (George Michael, Patsy Kensit, Elton John, Dave Stewart) about their sex lives.

John Lennon, of course, was giving interviews from his bed when Paula was still doing homework. The excellent *The Beatles Anthology* (Sun ITV), takes us up to *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and the news, according to Ringo, that we never got a "concept rock opera". And then we said, "Sod it. Let's just do tracks". Thank God for Scouse common sense.

Television preview

RECOMMENDED VIEWING THIS WEEKEND
by Gerard Gilbert

Screen Two: Saigon Baby Sat 9pm BBC2
Sex with Paula Sat 9.55pm C4
Equinox Sun 7pm C4
The Coronation Street Party Sun 7pm ITV
The Beatles Anthology Sun 8pm ITV
Cold Comfort Farm Sun 9.35pm BBC1

Saturday Television and Radio

BBC1

7.25 News; Weather (5.492535).
7.30 SuperTed (7.191264).
7.40 Willy Fog (7.7622264). *
8.05 The Addams Family (R) (2002974). *
8.30 The New Adventures of Superman (R) (S)
(1.68142).
9.15 Live and Kicking (S) (84004535).
12.12 Weather (350993).
12.15 Grandstand. 12.20 Football Focus. 12.45 Racing from Ascot: 12.50 the MITIE Group Kennel Gate Novices Hurdle Race. 1.00 News. 1.05 Golf: Johnnie Walker World Championship from Jamaica. 1.15 Racing from Ascot: 1.20 the Long Walk Hurdle Race. 1.30 Swimming: action from the ASA National Winter Championships and Uncle Ben's Winter Swimming Challenge in Sheffield. 1.45 Racing from Ascot: 1.55 Betterware Cup (H'cap Chase). 2.05 Rugby Union: England vs Western Samoa. Live coverage from Twickenham (kick off at 2.30pm). See *The Big Match*, above.
4.10 Swimming. 4.45 Final Score (64643245).
5.10 News, Weather (3572622).
5.20 Local News, Weather (6643245).
5.25 Dad's Army: Mainwaring's men are ordered to guard a very important telephone line (R)
(8920974). *
5.55 Jim Davidson's Generation Game, England rugby stars Mike Catt and Dean Richards guest (S)
(911535). *
6.50 Auntie's Christmas Crackers. The BBC advertises itself (S) (572264).
7.00 Noel's House Party. Torvill and Dean are Gotcha'd (S) (19806).
7.50 The National Lottery Live. Michael Barrymore activates the balls - but not before subjecting us to a pop song he's recorded (S) (887993).
8.05 Casualty. Mike and Rachel take over the romantic storylines as a stressed-out salesmen needs treatment (S) (23805). *
8.55 News and Sport; Weather (Followed by National Lottery Update) (179355).
9.15 *Scrooged* (Richard Donner 1988 US). Bill Murray in misanthropic *Groundhog Day* form plays the Christmas-hating young TV network president in this update of Charles Dickens's sentimental story. Hell, he even sacks a mild-mannered underling for criticising his tasteless Yuletide show. "Rowdy" stuff for the light in head, humbugged one critic (S) (95831719). *
10.50 Match of the Day. Dennis Bergkamp and Ruud Gullit (if he's fit) meet as Chelsea take on Arsenal at Highbury. Plus, Aston Villa vs Coventry City (S) (6584245).
11.55 Golf. The Johnnie Walker World Championship from Tryall Resort, Jamaica (S) (692018).
12.5 Weather (2770104). To 1.30am.
REGIONS: Wales. 4.55pm Wales on Saturday. 5.20 Wales on Saturday. NI: 4.55pm Northern Ireland Results. 5.20 Inside Ulster News. 1.25 Inside Ulster News.

BBC2

8.20 Open University: Gwen - a Working Life (5184500). 8.45 Kedleston Hall (7347871).
9.10 The English Language: News Stories (8648351). 9.35 Open Advice: Something for Everyone (1247535). *
10.00 Chanya. Drama series set in 4th-century India (S) (8183142).
10.40 Video Byte. Asian pop (S) (6524603).
10.50 Network East (S) (9943332).
11.10 Bollywood or Bust. Saeed Jaffrey and Shobu Kapoor guest (S) (6724657).
11.50 Film 95 with Barry Norman. Last week's new releases re-Bazza'd (S) (7991794). *
12.20 Still in Business (R) (3151142).
12.35 *Saturday Matinée*: Duel in the Sun (King Vidor 1946 US). Deliriously and hilariously florid Wagnerian western - in molten Technicolor and famously nicknamed *Lust in the Dust* - in which Jennifer Jones's feisty half-caste Tex-Mex lass is fostered by a cattle ranch owner, only to be lusted over by his sons: brutal, egotistical Gregory Peck, and the more caring, sharing Joseph Cotten. Also with Lionel Barrymore, Lillian Gish, Walter Huston (4123017). *
2.40 *Saturday Matinée*: Solomon and Sheba (King Vidor 1949 US). The Old Testament wise one and the sex kitten of the Nile fight and kiss in Vidor's lurid, up-tempo spectacular. Gina Lollobrigida is the queen, while Yul Brynner took over as Solomon after Tyrone Power (led halfway through filming) in Spain (76642845).
4.55 The Oprah Winfrey Show. Aron Nevels sings songs of love (6411210). *
5.35 *TOTP* (2) (3182210).
6.20 One Man and His Dog. Cumbria is the setting for the second semi-final (S) (656516). *
7.05 News and Sport; Weather (190719). *
7.20 Assignment. Julian O'Halloran, in Israel, uncovers the forces that spawned the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, and asks whether they can now be contained (S) (124213). *
8.05 TX. Profile of Frantz Fanon, one of the major black intellectuals of the 20th century (S) (236697). *
8.55 Chase Up. Scriptwriter and director Abraham Polonsky on Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* (S) (296413).
9.00 Screen Two: *Saigon Baby*. See Preview, above (95834806). *
10.35 I've Got News for You. Mark Little and Lee Hurst from one of the third edition's of the fading news quiz (S) (G355355).
11.05 Unplugged: The Eagles - Hell Freezes Over. The title refers to more arctic ones, when the laid-back American rockers claimed they would only play together again when hell freezes over (714177).
12.15 *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese 1980 US). Marley's visceral biopic of boxer Jake La Motta with De Niro in the lead role. See *The Big Picture*, above (3803036). To 2.25am.

ITV/London

6.00 GMTV. 6.00 News; Weather. 6.10 Re-Win'd. 6.40 Tom and Jerry Kids. 7.15 Saturday Disney. PJ and Duncan guest. 8.25 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (8470784).
9.25 Scratches & Co. The final programme of the series comes from seasonal Ainsworth, with guests Frank Bruno and Minswear. Plus, an interview with Lenny Kravitz (S) (88333974).
11.30 The Chart Show. Cockney Rebel are in the Video Vault (R) (S) (21622).
12.30 SpeakEasy (S) (33388).
1.00 News; Weather (26941581). *
1.05 Local News; Weather (26940852). *
1.10 Movies Games and Videos. A look at the film Babe, about a pig that believes it's a sheepdog (1190210).
1.45 Cartoon Time (73160516).
1.50 The Munsters. Today, the family take a TV director to court (S) (36111413).
2.20 The A-Team. Part two of the boys' Amazonian trip in search of a girl's missing fiancé (R) (9584142).
3.15 *Airwolf* (R) (485887).
4.15 SpeakEasy Does the Business. A round-up of the supposedly glamorous careers featured in the series (400061).
4.45 News; Sports Weather (1723887). *
5.05 Local News; Weather (6374142). *
5.20 New Baywatch. Part two of Mitch and Matt's harrowing Hawaiian adventure (S) (9649516). *
6.15 *Gladiators* (S) (464429). *
7.15 Blind Date (Including Lottery Result) (S) (380413). *
8.15 Raise the Roof. Another luxury bungalow in Florida on offer. Have they got a job lot, or something? (S) (6953251). *
8.45 News; National Lottery Update (G92005). *
9.00 Jack Dee's Saturday Night. Old-style variety show with a miscast Jack Dee scowling away as compere, and guests including Freddie Starr, Paul Weller and Elton John (S) (186158). *
9.45 *Young Guru* II. *Blaze of Glory* (Geoff Murphy 1990 US). The Brat Pack reassemble for the sequel to their western frolics. With Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips and Christian Slater (751993).
11.40 Tropical Heat. "Nick finds himself attracted to a beautiful woman" - go to be the most informative programme listing of all time (S) (627451).
12.40 American Gladiators (S) (7718746).
1.30 The Big E (S) (4872017).
2.20 *BPW* (S) (5449272).
3.15 Best of British Motorsport (80303982).
3.40 *Les Misérables* (Glen Jordan 1978 US). The endlessly re-filmed Victor Hugo story given an intelligent reading by Richard Jordan as Valjean, Anthony Perkins as Javert, and a stalwart British cast including Cyril Cusack, John Gielgud and Flora Robson (686479).
5.30 News (28017). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

6.05 *Sesame Street* (R) (9989023).
7.05 *Ovive* (R) (4177974).
7.15 *The Adventures of Sonic the Hedgehog* (R) (279332).
7.40 *Womex* (R) (535852).
8.00 *Trans World Sport* (47351).
9.00 *The Morning Line*. Horse-racing magazine (S) (34069).
10.00 *Bitzt* America football magazine (53784).
11.00 *Gazetta Football Italia*. Italian football magazine (46448).
12.00 *Sportsparts*. Carl Lewis and Lee Trevino (R) (52974).
12.30 *The Great Marathas* (2347177).
12.55 *Tribute to Alexander Mackendrick*. Stephen Frears introduces a short season of films (he didn't actually make that many) of the Scots-American director Alexander Mackendrick, who made three Ealing classics before moving to America for his cynical masterpiece, *The Sweet Smell of Success* (R) (5405177).
1.10 *Mandy* (Alexander Mackendrick 1952 UK). Mandy (Audrey Hepburn) recurring interest in child psychology got its first outing in his only non-comedic Ealing movie, starring seven-year-old Mandy Miller as a deaf-and-dumb girl having communication problems with her parents, Phyllis Calvert and Terence Morgan (1362061). *
2.50 *The Magie* (Alexander Mackendrick 1953 UK). Blustering American millionaire Paul Douglas gets his comeuppance from a group of wily Scots transporting his goods to a group of wily Scots in Mackendrick's third Ealing comedy (5372619). *
4.35 *Australia Wild* (S) (1492974).
5.05 *Brookside* Omnibus (S) (7711351). *
6.30 *Right to Reply*. Michael Grade answers criticisms that C4 has abandoned its original remit and is now chasing ratings and revenue (6577). *
7.00 *A Week in Politics*. Conservative politicians discuss the outcome of the EC Madrid summit (9535).
8.00 *The Hot Rock* (Peter Yates 1972 US). Brothers-in-law Robert Redford and George Segal think they've executed the perfect heist in this well-crafted caper movie (7254239). *
9.55 Sex with Paula. That Paula Yates they're talking about. See Preview, above (615974). *
10.55 *Camel Knowledge*. From *Love Weekender*, a quiz for couples to test their knowledge of each other (R) (344142).
11.35 *Cought Looking*. Gay male fantasies (R) (746531). *
12.15 *Doomed Megalopolis: The Rise of the Dragon*. Manga mayhem from Japan (S) (2377036).
1.05 *YET* The latest entertainment news from America (S) (410475).
1.35 *Arrested Development in the House*. The American rappers visit post-apartheid South Africa (R) (5006388). To 3.05am.

ITV/Regions

AMERICA As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (33388). 1.10 *The Big Byte* (44424177). 1.40 *Film* (R) (212301). 3.45 *Alwol* (484158). 11.40 *Don't Look Now* We're Being Shot (3419123). 1.55 *American Gladiators* (220889). 2.30 *The Big E* (882272). 3.40 *Car* (BPM) (3607494). 4.35 *Top Ten* (5473892). 5.00-5.30am Movies, Games and Videos (369302).
TIREES/ORKNEY As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (33388). 1.10 *seeQuest* (S) (7941142). 2.05 *Films* (33388). 1.10 *Agatha Christie's Murder Is Easy* (602887). 3.50 *Alwol* (2123413). 5.10 *Time: Fall Time* (3567790). 11.40 *Short Story Cinema* (9826222). 12.10 *War of the Worlds* (2807307). 1.05 *Time* (2321111). 2.15 *Warrior* (2123413). 3.50 *Thunder in Paradise* (2123413). 5.10 *Central Match - Goals Extra* (356790). 11.40 *Boiling* (624511). 3.40 *Asian Eye* (787824).
CENTRAL As London except: 12.30pm *Garfield's Thanksgiving* (33388). 1.10 *The Munsters Today* (44424177). 1.40 *Cartoon Time* (73161245). 1.45 *Movies and Video* (44424177). 2.15 *WCW Worldwide Wrestling* (8828516). 2.55 *Alwol* (3112239). 3.50 *Thunder in Paradise* (2123413). 5.10 *Central Match - Goals Extra* (356790). 11.40 *Boiling* (624511). 3.40 *Asian Eye* (787824).
NORTHEN As London except: 12.30pm *Murder* (33388). 1.10 *A Year in the Life* (6424177). 1.40 *Cartoon Time* (73161245). 2.15 *Knight Rider* (497522). 2.45 *Thunder in Paradise* (488207). 3.45 *5.05pm Knight Rider* (484158).
MORBIAN As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (33388). 1.10 *A Year in the Life* (6424177). 1.40 *Cartoon Time* (73161245). 2.15 *Knight Rider* (497522). 2.45 *Thunder in Paradise* (488207). 3.45 *5.05pm Knight Rider* (484158).
WEST COUNTRY As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (33388). 1.10 *Wanted Dead or Alive* (7190210). 1.45 *Cartoon Time* (73161245). 2.15 *Warrior* (2123413). 2.50 *Time* (G119068). 3.45 *Kids* (484158). 11.40 *Don't Look Now* We're Being Shot (67031887). 1.55 *American Gladiators* (3222036). 2.50 *Short Story Cinema* (73161245). 3.40 *Boiling* (5670494). 4.35 *Top Ten* (5473892). 5.00-5.30am *Freecore* (699011).
WEST MIDLANDS As London except: 12.30pm *Television Sport* (47351). 1.10 *The Pictures* (615448). 12.30pm *Grand Prix* (662101). 1.00 *Tributes to Michael Jackson* (48840790). 2.15 *Horror* (27711351). 6.30 *Horror* (697210). 7.15 *Horror* (6880552). 8.15 *Til Dawn* (647210). 9.15 *Horror* (636852). 9.45 *Holy Places* (602790). 12.15-1.05am *Doomed Megalopolis* (2377036).
PM face

Radio

